REVIVAL SERMONS

W. B. RILEY

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REVIVAL SERMONS

by W. B. RILEY, D. D.

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Revival Sermons

ESSENTIALS IN EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM

By

WILLIAM BELL RILEY, D.D.

Pastor, First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minn.,
Author, "Christ The Incomparable,"
"The Perennial Revival," etc.

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FOREWORD

MY ministerial life has been a long-drawn-out debate; the subject of controversy has been the character of my ministry. For forty-five consecutive years I have been in the pastorate; for the same length of time I have been tempted to quit it for evangelism. To-day, in looking over the past, I find my debate is not at an end.

On the one hand, the blessed church I serve and the school I was privileged twenty-five years ago to found comfort me concerning the choice of the pastorate. On the other hand, the sight of unregenerate multitudes, walking the broad way, makes me wonder still if I should not have spent every waking hour in soul winning.

This debate has determined my life course and has given me, at the lips of my brethren, the title, "The Pastor Evangelist." I have contributed something like forty large volumes and a greater number of smaller ones to Biblical exposition, to the defense of the essential doctrines of the Church and to the complex questions associated with Church life.

The volume on *The Perennial Revival* was and is an appeal to church men to engage in continuous soul winning, and it contains a setting forth of

certain principles which we have found to be both Biblical and practical.

This volume is in one sense a companion-piece to that, for it contains a series of twelve sermons which have been blessed, above their fellows, in soul-winning results. We have seen many thousands respond to these discourses in spoken form. We now send them forth in print, trusting that type may not take from them their spiritual power or import.

W. B. R.

Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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I

THE NEED OF A REVIVAL

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"—PSALM 85:6.

WE propose for this volume a series of twelve talks, every one of which has to do with the general subject of soul-winning.

Very generally in our country districts, and to a great extent in the city as well, the autumn and winter months are expected to be the months of harvest in spiritual things. Protracted meetings multiply in the churches; revivals are sought by many and enjoyed by some, and the period is one that repeats in some measure the history of Pentecost, for there are "added daily" to the churches "such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

Some people object to what we call "a revival." They regard the very term as composing a condition of unusual excitement, produced mainly by an appeal to the emotions of men, and destined to end in little or no lasting good. There may be some cause for complaint at this point. If revival is only a magical appeal to the feelings of men and comes in consequence of human effort or oratory, and not by the power of the Spirit, it results in fanatical excitement, transient professions and

newspaper "puffs:" few sinners are saved, and no saints are refreshed.

But, after all, it remains true that the revival state is the only normal one for a church, and instead of trying at certain seasons to get up a revival, Christians ought to so live that a revival will be coming down from Heaven, like the snows and rains, through the entire season. Our noblest churches have illustrated the possibility of this. Witness Spurgeon's Tabernacle; Tremont Temple, Boston; the Baptist Temple, New York; the Auditorium Temple, Los Angeles; the Atlanta Tabernacle; the First Presbyterian of Seattle; my own church, and others of kindred spirit. The methods of the pastors of these churches have often been criticized; but any man, or set of men, who enjoy an unusual blessing, are as certain to be the subjects of adverse remark as Christ Himself was.

One who loves souls, however, and longs to see them saved will be willing to pay the price; and we hope in these addresses to stimulate that evangelistic spirit which we believe to be needful for the progress of the Church.

THE REVIVAL NECESSITY

We do not need to argue the necessity of a revival.

The condition of your heart, perhaps, with its cry unto God for a larger life, is sufficient conviction of that need.

The absolute deadness of many of our churches, the lack of deep interest in others and the feeble

life of even the better ones speak this same revival necessity.

First of all, then, the necessity is one of our own souls. It is a blessed fact that when one is born of God he is never quite satisfied with that coldness and indifference with which Satan constantly seeks to compass him about. He is never quite satisfied unless he believes himself to be on the upgrade, growing in grace.

We are often told now that we have nothing to do with the past, but each day should bring us a better experience, and we should dwell upon and live in that; and that is true! And yet, what should be, often is not; and there are men, not a few, who have seen better times in spiritual things than they to-day experience, and all such are likely to cry with David for revival.

William Cowper's hymn, written when Cowper was sane enough, expresses the sentiment of many a saint.

"Oh, for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.

" Return, O Holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast."

The Psalmist voiced the bitterest, deepest cry of his soul when he said, " Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? " (Ps. 85:5, 6).

It is claimed that when Tulley was banished from Italy, and Demosthenes was banished from Athens, they were unable to look back toward their homes, without bursting into tears.

But the presence and favour of God must be dearer to His children than Italy's fair skies and landscapes were beautiful to her native-born, and the sense of His lost love more hard to bear than banishment from the streets of Athens—the world's most intellectual city.

A saved man is never satisfied with that cold condition in which he knows little or nothing of the presence of his God.

The necessity is no less one of the very life of our churches. Dr. Gordon did not speak too strongly when he said, " Ecclesiastical corpses lie all about us. The caskets in which they repose are lined with satin. They are decorated with solid silver handles and abundant flowers; and, like other caskets, they are just large enough for their occupants, with no room for strangers. These churches have died of respectability and been embalmed in self-complacency, and if by the

grace of God our church is alive, let us be warned to use our opportunity, or the feet of them that buried her sisters will be at the door and will carry her out."

When I was pastor in Chicago, three pastors of the three largest churches of the South Side were together. One of them, a man of holy fervour, and of the Spirit's favour, unbosomed his heart, and pleaded with his people and the people of the other two congregations for a Christianity worthy the name, a Church that was alive, and a seeking of souls that should mean salvation. At the close of the service, when these three pastors sat together, the other two said to my friend, "Unless some such revival comes to these churches, there is no longer occasion for their existence."

When I study the state of religion in our churches, I cry with David, "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" (Ps. 85:6).

Everywhere to-day, unsettled pastors are asking, What is the trouble in the churches? and distracted factions are wondering why they cannot agree and see God's work go on; and the simple answer is, There is not spiritual life enough to make possible the satisfaction of a true pastor, not even enough to save the institution itself from dissolution.

THE CONDITIONS OF A TRUE REVIVAL

So far as we are wrong we must face about. The Psalmist understood that necessity, but made mistake in getting right. He prayed, "Turn us,

God of our salvation" (Ps. 85:4), whereas he should have turned himself. God's call is: "Turn ye, turn ye."

We are not wax figures, to be turned by some sort of machinery. We are sentient souls in possession of every motive power that controls conduct and determines character, and when we want to be right, we must face about. The conditions of revival have not changed since Solomon's time. God said then, in answer to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:13, 14).

Humility! Prayer! Supplication! Reformation! These are the conditions of revival; and, if we are to see the revival, we must meet them.

But I am not sure that God demands of every member of a church such facing about before He puts His favour upon the other members. On the contrary, revivals often begin with the importunate souls and spread from them to those less interested.

It is told that the first night after Father Chiniquy was converted, he spent the entire night in prayer. Next day he preached and a thousand souls were saved. John Wesley used to keep an old man travelling about with him to pray for his meetings. He was a man that knew God.

Albert Midlane understood the Father's promise

to importunate prayer, and knew how revivals came, and hence he wrote:

"Revive Thy work, O Lord,
Create soul thirst for Thee
And hungry for the Bread of Life,
Oh, may our spirits be."

Again, it is written, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

A few saints, living as they ought, are almost sure to see God's salvation come; but if their number is increased, converts from sin to the Saviour are the more sure.

Co-operation is a power in evangelization. We read that the apostles on the eve of Pentecost were in one place, and with one accord, and that is one of the essential elements of soul-saving to-day. The professed saint who, instead of lending his brethren hearty co-operation in this work, plays critic, condemns, distracts, is doing the Devil's will to a greater extent than the vilest sinner.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Many years ago, at Pine Lake, Indiana, we had to watch against prairie fires. One day when we had burned some brush and grass, I carried a pail of water, just before retiring to sleep, and poured it over the fire until not one spark was visible; but I forgot to scatter the sticks. Ere the morning broke, I was called out of bed. The wind

had risen and stirred the slumbering embers into a roaring flame, and I found great difficulty in keeping it from spreading to adjacent fuel. I know not what stick had the coal which, touched by this breath of air, flashed into a flame. It may have been a larger stick, quite as likely a little one; no matter, the material together, the spark and wind are all that are wanting.

So in spiritual things, the spark of divine love in one heart may seem small, but when that is brought into touch with the score or a hundred of others and the divine breath blows upon it, the revival that fills with a mighty sweep a church, and going beyond it spreads into the dead, dry tinder of sin-slain souls and converts them into glorious life.

If there is any set of men to-day who need the prayer of their brethren and the mercy of God, it is men who are not co-operating to win souls, for that is essential to revival.

THE RESULTS OF SUCH A REVIVAL

First, the refreshing of the saints. "That thy people may rejoice in thee" (Ps. 85:6). Oh, the joy among God's sons and daughters when the times of refreshing are on! The sweetest singing is sung when revival reigns; the most effective prayers are poured out in the midst of soul-saving. Money comes easy when men are being redeemed; service is voluntary when revivals sweep the churches.

In any part of the country one of the sad things about bleak winter is that birds then so seldom

sing, so rarely do that which is their nature. In winter the perfume of flowers fails and fruits are exceeding scarce. But what a transformation commences with spring! The air is bursting with song, laden with perfume. All the field is rich in blossoms, promise of harvest time, and spring is nature's revival. But sweeter than the song of birds is the song of saints, and they only sing when God's spirit is saving men and refreshing the saved of the spiritual drouth.

> *"In vain we tune our formal songs,*
> *In vain we strive to rise,*
> *Hosanna's language on our tongues,*
> *And our devotion dies."*

And if the saints are revived, sinners will be saved. I sometimes see reports in our religious papers that certain protracted meetings have resulted in a great revival to the Church, even though no converts were made. That is quite impossible. When saints rejoice, sinners will be saved. When the Church is revived, some section of the world will be redeemed. When Paul and Silas sang "the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25) and grew penitent. When the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles and disciples, the unregenerate experience a Pentecost.

I doubt if one soul in a church can be revived as it ought to be, without some other souls being brought to God, and when my church is barren in these things, I do not so much blame my brethren as examine my own spirit.

A New England servant girl got a blessing that filled her soul and went to praying for her unsaved mistress. One night the lady of that house could not sleep. Her sins were her sorrow, and waking her husband she said, "Dear, it seems to me I must be growing crazy, I am so distressed; but if you love me, go get a preacher to pray for my poor soul."

The husband answered, "Our girl Mary is a Christian; why not get her to pray?"

They arose and went together to the girl's door. It was slightly ajar. The light was dimly burning, and there before them they saw her upon her knees. Stopping instantly, they heard her pleading, "Oh, Lord, bless my mistress. Have mercy on her soul. She is good to me, and I want her to belong to my God."

They pushed the door open and kneeled beside her, and that night husband and wife—two souls—were saved.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

When saints are refreshed and souls saved, Heaven is happy. That is a feature of our revivals too often forgotten. Nobody ever writes to the newspapers, "Sinners are being saved here, and there is joy among the angels of God." But Christ says it is so. What joy some churches start in Heaven! They keep Heaven happy all the time!

You remember that the *Central America* went down off New York. Some days after that event

which saddened so many homes by robbing them to enrich the sea, the lifeboat came into New York bay; and when the weary watchers saw the flying streamers, they started up in hope. As she came nearer, the captain stood to the bowsprit and shouted through his trumpet, "Three more saved, three more saved!" The listeners at the beach sent the word into the streets, "Three more saved!" The people passing there shouted it city-centreward, "Three more saved!" until New York, Brooklyn, Hoboken, Jersey City and every suburban town and hamlet heard the news. There was never a sweeter message shouted from man to man, from street to street, from city to city, and it is the sweetest message heard in Heaven, more souls saved!

Brethren, let us bring out the lifeboats and bend to the oars, and be about this business of filling Heaven with happiness—God's business; we are partners in saving men!

II

SIX ESSENTIALS IN SOUL WINNING

" He that winneth souls is wise."—PROVERBS 11:30.

THE New Evangelism " is a much needed emphasis of the power of the personal touch. It is clear, however, that one of the most efficient ways of impressing any duty is to lend assistance to its sane discharge. Such is the purpose of this chapter.

Henry W. Longfellow, when yet in his youth, writing his father regarding the choice of a profession, remarked, " I am not sure as yet for what my talents fit me, but I am determined to be eminent in something." To what extent that determination affected Longfellow's success in life, who can tell? Perhaps none will deny that such an ambition was wholesome for the boy, and both stimulated and directed his energies. Worldly people may have ambitions in many directions; the true Christian's ambition should find expression in a single course, " He that winneth souls is wise."

The grand old Dr. Sharp, of Charles Street Church, Boston, once said, " I would rather have one young man come to my grave and affirm, ' The man who sleeps there arrested me in the course of sin and led me to Christ,' than to have the most magnificent obelisk that ever marked the place of

mortal remains." It was an ambition worthy a Christian! Many consecrated Christians enjoy it, and ask often, "How can we succeed in soul winning?"

The answers to this question would not necessarily be the same. No man has given an answer to this question that was full and final. Our largest hope looks only to helpful suggestions. But if experience, observation, and Scripture can league themselves in teaching certain lessons, we believe that those to be mentioned in this chapter are established as worthy of the name of fundamentals.

GET GOD'S CONCEPT OF THE SOUL'S WORTH

The Scripture voices it, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The perishable world is not, in the mind of God, comparable in value to the immortal soul. Christ would never have died to redeem the silver and gold, the cattle upon a thousand hills, the precious stones of land and sea. But no evangelical doubts that Christ would have been willing to die to redeem a single man; such is God's estimate of a soul.

J. Wilbur Chapman related how some Abyssinians took a British subject by the name of Campbell, prisoner. They carried him to the fortress of Magdala and consigned him to a dungeon without showing cause for the deed. It took six months for Great Britain to discover this. Then she demanded an instantaneous release, but King Theodore haughtily refused. In less than ten days, ten thousand British soldiers were on shipboard, sail-

ing down the coast to a point where they disembarked. They then marched seven hundred miles under a burning sun up the mountain heights and unto the very dungeon where the prisoner was hid. There they gave battle. The gates were torn down, the prisoner was lifted upon their shoulders and borne down the mountainside, and thence to the ship. It cost the British Government twenty-five millions of dollars to release that man. Such was the value they put upon the life and liberty of one English subject!

But God puts a greater price upon the life and liberty of a single soul. That is why He summoned all heaven to its redemption, and appointed His Son chief Captain and Leader to effect its liberty. When we get God's conception of the soul's worth no sacrifice will seem too great to make in the effort to save it; when we get God's conception of a soul's worth, no obstacle will seem insurmountable; when we get God's conception of a soul's worth we will sacrifice, as did Christ, to reclaim it from sin, believing with Solomon, "He that winneth souls is wise."

LET US CONSECRATE OURSELVES TO SOUL WINNING

Every one knows the meaning of consecration—"Set apart as sacred; dedicated to sacredness, and hence separated from common use."

Lyman Abbott illustrates by the two cups made at the command of the king by a jeweller. They came of a common piece of silver, and were of exact size and weight. One was put into the hand of the cupbearer to do service to man; and one was

sent to the temple to do service to God. The latter was consecrated.

Consecration is one of the secrets of successful soul-winning. Dr. A. C. Dixon once remarked, "As one walks down the corridor of the Astor House, New York, on his way to the restaurant, he sees a man standing at the door who never looks at your face. His business is to black shoes. He is consecrated to it."

Consecration is more needed in soul-winning than intelligence or extensive education. The world's greatest intellectual lights have not always been the world's greatest religious lights, and its most highly educated men are not always its most effective Christians. We have splendid genius in the Church. We have more than our share of intellectuality. We think that statistics will prove without question that, as a class, Christian men are the world's best educated. But all of these things, if their possessors be without consecration, count for naught in soul winning. We have known a boy, of medium ability, at work with his schoolmates, to win more souls between the day of his conversion at seven years of age and the time we parted company from him at twelve, than the average president of a Christian college has to his credit. Henry Ward Beecher, the Shakespeare of the American pulpit, was led to Christ by a man as black as midnight, whose genius consisted of one thing, and one thing only—he knew God and sought the salvation of his fellows.

Many have read *The Last Pages of an Officer's Diary,* and recall how that army officer who had

but thirty days to live, set about finding some one to show him the way of salvation. In four or five pulpits, representing as many denominations, he heard men who were eloquent enough, but who gave his soul no assistance in its search after life. When all but a few days of the thirty had passed and he was growing desperate in his darkness, he rose after a restless night, dressed himself, and started for the street, and stumbled over the old sexton who, in the early morning, sat upon the door-step, in Bible study. Seeing that the sexton's Bible was marked and thumbworn, he clutched for it, but the old man held it with a covetousness such as some men show only for silver and gold. When, however, he learned the purpose of the officer, he invited him to a seat at his side, and in ten minutes had shown him the way of salvation and brought him to the point where he could say with Paul, "To live is Christ and to die is gain."

Better be a sexton of any church at a small salary, knowing how to point men to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, than the most eloquent preacher that ever graced any pulpit without that same knowledge.

SURRENDER TO THE SPIRIT'S COUNSEL

"Yield ye yourselves unto him." He leads the yielded one, and His leadership insures success. It may take one by strange ways, and other men may question one's sanity at times; but, after all, the Spirit-led man is the only sane man. It was a strange thing for Philip to leave the work in Samaria and go toward the south into a desert way.

But it was Spirit-directed, and hence sane. No man plays the fool who follows the leadings of the Holy Spirit, even though that take him against what he would commonly regard his better judgment.

Dr. Wayland Hoyt related an experience in illustration of this point. When he was pastor in Brooklyn, he was engaged in special meetings, and among those who evinced some interest was a gentleman for whom he had often prayed. He noticed his attendance one week night, and thought he ought to speak to him about his soul, but through fear refrained. Another night when he had returned to his home late, finding himself too nervous to sleep, he was reading in his study. As he read, something seemed to whisper in his ear, "Go and see that man to-night." But the preacher mentally replied, "It is after twelve o'clock and he is asleep and everyone in bed," and he read on. But the impression remained and grew. He argued, "It is snowing, and I am tired!" and finally, "I have been working hard all day, and I don't want to go!" But all excuses to the contrary, the Spirit persisted and at last he yielded and went.

As he touched the man's doorbell, he thought, "What a fool I am to be ringing a man's bell at one o'clock in the morning. He will think I am insane." But instantly the door opened, and the man stood there fully clothed and said, "Come in; and God bless you. You are the man I have been waiting for all night. Wife and children and the servants are all asleep, but I could not sleep; I felt that I must find Jesus to-night." And the great preacher testified, "It was no trouble to show that

man the way, for the 'Spirit who had guided me had also gone before me.'"

Is it not a mistake to suppose that only sample saints can enjoy the guidance of the Spirit of God; that only a few of the world's great souls have been selected as the subjects of His special favour? Many of us are fathers, and know the joy of giving good gifts to our children. Let us never forget that God has more pleasure in giving the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Let us not go after men until He sends us. Let us never refuse when He says, "Go;" for His guidance means good success!

EMPLOY THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

It is the divinely appointed instrument of salvation. The man who uses it works under the promise. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11).

It might be well for us to remember that the promise is to the *preached word* rather than to the person preaching. Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

"The power of God unto salvation!" Truly it is at once a divinely appointed and potent instrument. "For the word of God is quick, and power-

ful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Let us use it!

In preaching the Word, claim the promise, "It shall not return unto me void."

A friend who was somewhat in sympathy with higher criticism once asked this question of the writer, "You know E——, his manner of life, his mental capacity, and you also know Pastor M——, one of the most beautiful characters in this country, possessed also of one of the most brilliant intellects. To my knowledge when Pastor M—— was yet a young man, he prayed God to make him a winner of souls, and on Saturday he would go into his pulpit with his face in the dust, and beg that next day he might see men turn to God in great numbers. But nothing came of it. He never was a soul winner; he is not a soul winner now. But E——, both in his work in his own church while he was yet a pastor, and afterward in various cities about the country as an evangelist, saw thousands of people profess a faith in Christ as the result of his preaching. Now, he is not a man of any such mental ability, nor of any such high moral character as my friend, Dr. M., the pastor mentioned. How explain why God made one a winner of souls, and refused that privilege to the other?"

The answer was instant, and, as we believe, correct. "We admit all you say concerning these men, but there is one thing you forget. The pastor you mention is also my friend, and I ardently admire him for his moral character and his great

brain; but never have I heard him so much as make mention of the blood of Jesus Christ. The heart of the Gospel has been left out of his preaching, and his sermons have been brilliant philosophical discussions, destitute often of even a quotation from the Word after he had parted company with his text. Our friend E—— makes much of the blood, and adds Scripture to Scripture in his discussion. Let us remember that God's promise is to the preaching of the Word and not to eloquent utterance! "

Whenever a man reaches the point where he feels it is as profitable to take a text from Shakespeare as from Paul, he must expect a fruitless ministry. Whenever a personal worker has nothing better than human arguments, or even an exceptional experience to rehearse before a man under conviction, he need not look to see the man come to Christ. It is the Word of God that wins from sin to the Saviour, and, without it, success in soul winning is unknown. By way of illustration, a personal experience: It was on a Christmas evening at the Union Mission in Minneapolis. Many of the men present in that downtown mission were drunk; some of them so boisterous that they had to be ejected to save the service from confusion. When the sermon was finished an opportunity was given for prayer. About a dozen men came forward, among them one who looked far worse than any of his unfortunate fellows. Drink had clothed him in rags, bloated his face, and dulled his mind.

Once at his side, we called his attention to the promise in John 6:37, " All that the Father giveth

me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." We emphasized it by reading it three or four times. Then we urged him to read it, which he did. We requested a second reading, a third, a fourth, a fifth, until evidently the meaning of the promise was clearly apprehended. Then, after prayer, we parted company. Eight days went by, and in a Sunday afternoon meeting, for men only, where several came out for Christ, this man of the mission meeting was among them. He was sober, clean, clear-eyed; so marvellously improved in appearance that we failed to recognize him at first. When he had made himself known, we involuntarily remarked, "Mr. Carroll, you look like another man," to which he replied, "By the grace of God, I am another man. I trusted that promise of John 6:37, and He has kept it. I have been sober ever since that night, with no desire even to use tobacco. I have been able daily to make an honest living, and now I have a new lease on life, or rather, a lease on a new life!" Up to the day when he sickened and died, he was a most faithful Christian.

Employ the sword of the Spirit! Mr. Spurgeon's maxim had occasion. It was often addressed to his students, "Have your own Bible, and turn to the passages showing the way of salvation. The most successful soul winner I know takes men captive by the sword of the Spirit."

Is not that what Paul meant when he wrote to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"?

IN THIS, THE DIVINEST WORK, BE DIRECT

Here Christ is our example. No indirectness with Him! To the fisherman He said, "Follow me;" to the publican, "Come after me;" to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again;" to the woman at Sychar, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

There are teachers who advise that we adroitly introduce our Jesus; that we engage with men upon all the subjects in which they are interested and watch for an opportunity to work around to the great theme of the soul and its salvation. Seminary professors, whose memory we revere, great and good men of God, taught us after this manner! But there is no warrant in the Word.

Christ's example was also the apostolic method. Let us read the first chapter of John and see how the early disciples won their associates; or the second chapter of Acts, or the fourth, or the eighth, or the ministry of Paul as recorded in that same book. Whatever else these apostles did, directness in appeal to men characterized every one of them who became a soul winner. Andrew "findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." There is our sample for personal work. There is no indirectness suggested by that process, nor by any other Scripture. We believe the indisposition to speak to men frankly and at once about their souls is suggested by the Adversary.

Dr. Wharton once addressed the students of the Southern Baptist Seminary. In the course of his remarks from the text, " Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in," he said, " During the war I was attending Roanoke College at Salem, Virginia. For several days it was reported that General Averill, in command of a heavy force, was on a raid through Virginia and aiming at Salem to tap the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad at that point, and thus cut off the supplies coming to Lynchburg. One morning the cry was heard, ' The Yankees are coming! ' Looking up the street, we saw them riding pell-mell into town, horses' hoofs clattering, sabers rattling, men shouting, women and children flying to their homes, and fear and confusion falling upon all. A good number of us young fellows took to our heels for the woods about half a mile away. When nearly across the field, I heard several shrill, hissing sounds in my vicinity, followed by sharp reports of firearms. Looking back, I saw there was a man after me on horseback, and he seemed to be shooting at every jump. I reached the fence and fell over it, and lay as flat on the ground as a lizard on a log. Presently I heard him say, ' Come out of there, sir! ' I looked up, and he had a great big sharpshooter levelled at me, and the hammer of it was saying, ' Be quick, or you are gone.'

" ' Come out,' the fellow said. The end of that pistol was as big as a stovepipe. There was only one thing to do. ' Yes, sir,' I said, ' I am going to. Don't shoot! ' and out I came. Now I call that personal work. He was after me and he got me! "

Why cannot we as Christian soldiers be as courageous and as direct in our methods, that we may capture men for Him?

How much we lose, by indirectness, who can measure? A pastor in New York City walked home with a druggist, watching for an opportunity to speak to him about his soul, but did not find it. Once at his door, the druggist urged the pastor to come in. He accepted, spent an hour in conversation, but saw no chance to speak of Christ. After he had put on his overcoat and was ready to leave, the druggist laid a hand on his shoulder and said, "Can't you stay a little longer and pray with us? I have been greatly interested for my soul, and shall never be satisfied until I am a saved man."

There are those who have been in rebellion against Christ, who have grown tired of it and long for surrender, and, like the Confederates at Richmond, will be exceedingly glad when the day comes that they are conquered and peace has been declared between them and Him whose right it is to reign.

Let Philip teach us, "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." Directness in soul winning is after the Divine example and is under the Divine benediction.

WITH WHATEVER SUCCESS BE DISSATISFIED

The man who is satisfied in soul winning is stul-

tified in spiritual interest. We remember how it is related of the great Danish sculptor, Thorwaldsen, that, having finished, to his own satisfaction, a piece of work, he sat in gloom with a sob in his soul and declared that, having once realized his ideal, he feared that henceforth he should accomplish nothing. The man that is satisfied in soul winning has better occasion for such fear. Paul had seen scores turn to God in consequence of his preaching before he ever penned the words, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

One may rejoice in the success given, but to be satisfied with it would be to grow indifferent to the dying about us. At college we had a roommate who seemed sad and dispirited. One day we turned upon him and asked, "Why are you not more happy? Your father provides you all the money you need. You have enjoyed good school advantages all your life. In person you are attractive, and you are popular, and yet there is a gloom over your spirit." He answered by reciting an experience, the particulars of which were well known to me. It involved the rescue of three persons from drowning. But while he was about the work, three others went down to be seen no more until the grappling hooks reclaimed the dead. And, concluding the story, he remarked, "Never since that day have I been entirely happy, because the cries of those drowning ones are still in my ears."

Ah, beloved, is not one difficulty with the present

day evangelism the fact that our ears are dead? The cries of the drowning are not in them. The men about us are going down, and we know it, but we are not deeply disturbed over it. If we were, our very distress would convert us into soul-winners every one. We have not forgotten Moody's report of his first impulse in soul winning. A young man, teaching a class of girls in Moody's Sunday School in Chicago, sickened with consumption and was about to die. He seemed in such distress that Moody sought to comfort him by saying that he had done better with that class of girls than any one else. Under the hands of others they had seemed incorrigible. But he was so weighed down with sorrow because he had failed to bring even one of them to Christ that Moody hired a carriage and drove the young man to the distant homes of every one of those girls.

According to Moody's report, he entered each home, and said, "I have just come to ask you to come to the Saviour." And then he prayed as Moody had never heard a man pray. For ten days he laboured, and at the end of the ten days every one of that large class had yielded to Christ. When the train was moving to take him to the South, they stood in the Michigan Southern depot, tearful at parting from this noble teacher, yet joyful in their newly found hope. And as he left for that Southland, to die there, as it afterward proved, he went, having illustrated what ten days' work for God can do when one converts his dissatisfaction into soul-winning; yes, into inspiration in service!

III

PRESUMPTUOUS SINS

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins! let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."—PSALM 19:13.

THERE is no bigger word in the human language than this that we spell with three letters, save one. The biggest word is God. But the blackest word, and the word that stands second in the experience of men is SIN. It is Satan's first word; the one that he loves most and best. Upon it, he plays as the musician does upon the scale of seven notes. One he tempts to this sin and another to that, one to a small, one to a secret sin, one to a presumptuous sin, and another to an unpardonable sin. No one escapes his appeal to some sort of a sin. It is a little sin that undermines man's character, the secret sin that seduces him to deeper depths, the presumptuous sin that plunges him headlong into evil and the unpardonable sin that utterly destroys his soul; but the end of all sin is the same, "for sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

We wish to consider one of these "Presumptuous Sins." David prayed wisely, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have

dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

There are three questions that I want to raise concerning " Presumptuous Sins:" What are they? Why are they especially dangerous? How shall we escape them?

WHAT ARE THEY?

Unquestionably, they are sins against the light, against knowledge. If we go back to the Old Testament Scriptures, we will find them so defined in the Levitical Law. There were certain sins committed with open eyes in violation of God's commandment for which no mercy was to be shown, and they called them " Presumptuous Sins." The same word describes them to this day. We say a man is presumptuous when he dares to do a thing knowing in advance of his action, that it is an imposition and wrong.

Some years ago, I was with a party in central Indiana squirrel hunting. We were walking along a road where the signs " posted " appeared full before us on the farmer's gate. Just after passing it, two squirrels crossed our path and the hunters went after them into the posted ground, and shot them out of the trees in the man's barn lot. Later in the day, having unconsciously made a circuit back to almost the same point, but coming up to the place in such a way as not to recognize it, some other squirrels were shot in the same lot. In the action of the morning there was a presumptuous violation of law, for we saw the sign " Posted," and dared to pass it in pursuit of game. In the after-

noon, we did not consciously violate the law, for we knew not that we were on posted ground; so that while the same act, at the same point, was committed, it was ignorant violation while in the morning it was presumption.

Charles Spurgeon, in a sermon on this subject, argues the same idea. He says, " Young man, you were once tempted, and perhaps it was but yesterday, to commit a certain act. The very moment you were tempted conscience said, ' It is wrong, it is abominable in the sight of the Lord.' Your fellow apprentice committed the same sin without the warning of conscience. In him, it was the guilt, guilt that needs to be washed away with the Saviour's blood, but it was not such guilt in him as it was in you because your conscience checked you, your conscience told you of the danger, warned you of the punishment, and yet you dared go against God knowing that it was against God, and therefore you sinned presumptuously. I beg of you to be slow in the commission of such sins, for do you not remember what Paul said to the Hebrews, ' If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.' "

Presumptuous sins, also, are sins deliberately planned. You remember that under the ancient Levitical system there were cities of refuge for certain offenders against God's law. The man who had wronged his neighbour, or in hot blood had committed murder might escape to these cities and

be saved. Once within their gates, no avenger could touch him; or he might go to the altar and throw himself upon that, and his enemy dare not slay him, on the altar of God; but in Exodus, the twenty-first chapter, we read, " But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die."

It ought to make a vast difference whether a man's evil doings are deliberately planned or not. The poor fellow with a hot temper who strikes his neighbour down in one moment and sorrows over the act all his remaining days is a subject of our pity.

In an adjoining state, a young man killed a game warden, a few years ago, because the game warden shot down his dogs that were in pursuit of protected game. In the fever of excitement, he lifted his gun to his shoulder, it flashed and the game warden fell dead. Since that time he has been paying the price in the state penitentiary; but I know not a few people who are personally acquainted with him, who say that there was no more noble-hearted, generous fellow in all the vicinity, and instead of condemning him as a murderer, they commiserate him as a man who had the misfortune of a hot temper coupled with a tender heart; and so long as the cell holds him as a subject these people will not be satisfied. They feel that he ought to be free.

No such sentiment as that is possible toward the midnight assassin who plans for days to put a fellow-man to death and make way with his pocket-book. All society hates such a man and stands

ready to hunt him into the penitentiary or even unto the gallows. Both men have been guilty of the fearful sin of slaying a fellow, but the one did it impetuously and we pity him; the other presumptuously and we condemn him, and call for the gallows. God is not subject to like passions with us. He shows more commiseration to one than we do, and perhaps more of proper condemnation to the other than we do, and yet God does distinguish between the impetuous, unintentional offender, and the cool, calculating, planning, presumptuous sinner.

Sins committed under the sentiment, God is good, are also presumptuous. The practical outworking of Unitarianism and Universalism is presumptuous sin. The moment we allow that God will not surely punish sin, men take advantage of the admission and presume to commit it at pleasure. There is no known sentiment so well calculated to set the soul in the way of destruction as this. The moment the man gets to the point where he walks into iniquity consoling himself with the thought, " Well, this is wrong, but God is good and He'll forgive me," that man is in the toils of Satan, the control of every devilish spirit. When I hear such people talk, it reminds me of what A. C. Dixon said touching the conduct of a certain girl in Baltimore, Maryland. Her mother used the garret for her sweetmeats—jams and jellies—and among them there was one jar for which this bit of femininity had a peculiar liking. At last the mother discovered that the little daughter was dipping her fingers into the jam daily and disposing of it in considerable quantities. She thought to correct her

by saying, " This is wrong, and God will be angry if you do it again." The next day she discovered the little miss in the same jar, her fat hands covered with the stains and her face bearing unspeakable evidence of her sin. Her mother said, " Did not I tell you that it was wrong and God would be angry? " To which she replied, " Yes, I know, mamma; He would not like it; but I am asking Him to forgive me all the time."

There are better grown people whose conduct is upon the same basis. They presume on the kindness of God, the very thing against which the Word is most explicit and which is most offensive to the Father. What father among you overhearing your boys say, " Well, we ought not to do this and papa said we should not, but then he is good and he'll let us off easy," would not immediately proceed to abolish that theory; and the heavenly Father will not certainly tolerate sentiments that seem so evil to mortal man. It is distinctly declared in His word that " the righteousness of the upright shall deliver them; but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness." " When a wicked man dieth his expectation shall perish, and the hope of the unjust man perisheth," and again, " The desire of the righteous is the only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath."

WHY ARE SUCH SINS ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS?

In the first place, because they despise the light. One of the chiefest sins that men ever commit exists in doing that very thing. That is why Paul said, " It is impossible for those who were once en-

lightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

Charles Spurgeon thought that the greatest sinners were those who sinned against the influences of holy instruction and Christian example, which is only another way of saying what we have just asserted. Children of godly parents, says he, who have been brought up and instructed in the fear of God from their youth are among the chief of sinners, if they turn aside from the way of life. When they transgress there is a heavy weight about their act which is not to be found in the common sin of the children of the slums, or the Arabs of the gutter, the offspring of the degraded who know no better—poor souls—and hence their transgressions are sins of ignorance.

I remember how this came home to my heart when I was convinced of my sin. I had not engaged in any of the grosser vices, but then I had not been tempted to them, but had been carefully guarded from vicious influences; but I remembered that I had been disobedient to my parents, proud in spirit, forgetful of God's commands. I knew better—knew better from the very first. This put me, in my own estimation, among the chief of sinners. It had cost me much to do evil, for I had sinned against the clearest light, and I beg some of you, children of Christian parents, taught in the Scriptures from your infancy, prayed over by importunate mothers and affectionate fathers, prayed

for by friends, preached to by godly men; having had the way of light shown you from your infancy, and yet, shutting your eyes against it, to understand that yours is a presumptuous sin against which God's indignation justly burns, and for which He must call you into judgment.

It was to that very thing that Jesus referred when He pronounced the doom of Capernaum. He had walked in her streets. He had talked to her people. He had told her the way of life. He had prayed for her repentance. He had preached His heart out in her midst and she had remained impenitent, and so He said in departing, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell;" and you remember His words touching those other favoured cities, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works that have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, but I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment day than for you;" and I declare it as my profoundest conviction that the poor sin-besotted children, born out of wedlock, bred in the alleys, educated of ignorance, unconsciously cultured into crime, have a better chance with God, and ought to have, than the children of favour who know the right, the whole circumstance of whose life keenly impresses the right, and yet dare to do wrong, defying God. It is a fearful thing to sin against the Light.

Such sins are essentially dangerous, also, because they act directly on the soul. The man who drinks

is destroying his body. The man who smokes is destroying his body, more slowly perhaps, but none the less surely. The man given to lust is destroying his body, but the man who presumes to sin, despising the law of God, is deadening his soul. You cannot cross the law at one hundred points and keep any conscience. When Pharaoh defied God, his heart hardened in consequence, and when the man of to-day does the same, he annihilates, in a measure, his moral sense, and it is a fearful thing to have a dull or dead conscience, a fearful thing to be indifferent to the Light, a fearful thing to give God no consideration in your conduct, a fearful thing to forget the interests of soul. The man who succeeds along these lines perfectly has sunk himself forever. So long as there is conscience, there is hope. So long as we sorrow over our sins, Jesus Christ stands ready to save us from them and the Word of God is likely to prove His power in lifting us up out of them.

I remember as a boy that a man was drowned near to my home in Kentucky. When they had failed to find the body with grapple hooks, they carried a cannon to the spot and fired it above the waters and the jar brought the body up; so, says some one, the thundering artillery of God's justice by those good gunners—memory and conscience—bring up to our eyes the hidden sins which we thought were buried forever, and it is infinitely better for us to see them, loathesome as they are, for we know that when we see them and confess them, our Lord is faithful to forgive them, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In the next place, such sins are especially offensive because *they defy God*. We read in the fifteenth chapter of Numbers, the thirtieth and thirty-first verses, these words, "The soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord, and the soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him."

Foster tells of an Italian prince who, in the old despotic age, became celebrated for his forbearance, but he had a servant who took advantage of his kindly disposition. With every pardon the servant became more reckless and impudent and eventually presumed to do anything with impunity. One day he entered the presence of the prince with his hat on, and when rebuked, he said, "I have a cold and it is not necessary to take it off." The much enduring master said, "I will take care that you never catch a cold again," and that day he was beheaded. One of the prince's friends expressed surprise at this severe sentence, saying, "You often pardoned him of more serious crimes." "Yes," said the prince, "but when the cup is full to the brim it will not do to add a single drop, unless you will run it over," and we do well to remember that the overflowing cup of God's mercy is wrath and destruction to the impenitent.

My third question is this:

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE SUCH SINS?

Let David lead us here. He has been guilty of

them and he has escaped out of them and is a saint to-day at God's right hand. Shall he not show us the way?

First of all, be it understood that *we must repent of them.* David did! The Fifty-first Psalm is the penitential Psalm in which he pours out his heart to God in a pitiful strain of repentance. It is a Psalm of Sorrow, the godly sorrow that worketh repentance. He cries out in the midst of it, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and clear when thou judgest." No self-defence in that.

Charles Spurgeon says repentance is an old-fashioned word, not much used by modern revivalists. "Oh," said a minister to me, "it is only a change of mind." This was thought to be a profound observation. Only a change of mind with regard to everything. Instead of saying it is only a change of mind, it seems more truthful to me to say, it is indeed a great and deep change, even a change of the mind itself. Whatever the Greek word may mean, repentance as an experience is no trifle. You will find few better definitions of it than the one given in the children's hymn:

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

That is your first step, but David has another suggestion in this text.

He says that *God must help us.* "Keep back

thy servant also from presumptuous sins" was an appeal to the power of God. He dare not trust himself against their temptations. The man who does is doomed. The man who looks to God for help has an occasion of hope. He lays hold on the Almighty and He will lift him up.

Dr. Gordon said, "I go into my garden after a terrific storm and find that my grapevine is fallen, its leaves are all torn, its boughs bespattered with mud, and I begin to talk to my vine. 'Oh, vine, thou needest to be pruned and enriched. I pour ashes about thy roots and pour water above thee, to cause thee to revive, and then thou wilt lift thyself in the light and health,' and then I do my best at pruning and enriching, but each day as I walk in my garden I see the vine there. It stretches up its tendrils indeed like supplicating fingers to the sky, but because it can find nothing upon which to lay hold it still is prostrate on the ground. Suppose instead of talking any more to my vine, I build a trellis above it, then it can lift itself up to the sunlight."

Oh, that is Christ's method. He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Christ is the Divine Trellis for lifting men's affections to God. The heart that was striving in vain to love the Father and was only falling back to earth beaten and baffled after its effort finds it possible in Jesus Christ to rise right up and lay hold upon Him, and in Him is help."

But we must ask His assistance. No man has ever yet been saved without having sought salvation. Hard-shelled Baptists, that I knew in my

youth, were such fatalists that they taught the doctrine of election without any reference to the disposition of the sinner; so many were elected and those were going to be saved. An old coloured man, accustomed to the political methods of the South, said, " I believes in the doctrine of election, but I notes that no man ever gits elected to office down here unless he's a candidate." It is equally true with reference to salvation. " All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," says Christ, and " Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The coming belongs to you, the acceptance and salvation belongs to Christ. He will fulfil his part. Will you perform yours?

Once or twice, in my life, I have had people request prayers in after-meetings and when I came to talk with them and ask them if they were saved, they said they thought not, and when I asked them if they had prayed to be forgiven, they said they had not prayed at all. How can men be saved when they do not pray? Desire that does not voice itself to God is feeble indeed, undeserving of answer. If you would be saved from sin presumptuous, as well as any other sort, you must ask it at God's hands. The publican said, " God be merciful to me a sinner," and went down to his house justified. You can do the same, if you will. Peter said, " Lord, save, or I perish," and immediately Christ stretched forth His hand and lifted him up. No matter how deeply you have sunk in the sea of sin, the same cry on your part will bring the same response from Jesus Christ, and He will lift you up, and set your feet upon a rock.

It seems a strange thing that one needs to plead with men to accept the salvation that is in Jesus Christ when that salvation carries with it pardon from the guilt of sin, and the freedom of a redeemed life. Men condemned to cells, or to the gallows, for crime put forth every possible effort to secure pardon. You may remember how it was with Mr. Painter, condemned to die in Chicago, on the charge of having murdered his wife. His case was tried in every possible court in the hope of getting his sentence revoked, and when all effort there had failed, his friends secured a large petition and presented it to Illinois' pardoning governor, hoping that he would intervene, and either set him free or commute the sentence. When that failed, some prominent politicians from Chicago made a trip to Springfield in the same interest. So it is with man's disposition to be pardoned by man from the sentence of crime, but God offers His pardon freely to sinners condemned to eternal death. How gladly we should accept it. With what praise for His forgiving love, with what joy should we hold aloft the pardon promised in this book, and say it is mine, and I am free from the sentence of sin.

Mr. Moody tells of a man on trial for his life. The witnesses came, testified to his guilt, the jury speedily brought in a verdict against him, and the judge passed the sentence of death. Through it all, he was perfectly calm, perfectly undisturbed. The judge marvelled and wondered if the man was sane, but he understood what he meant when the man put his hand in his bosom, pulled out a docu-

ment which proved to be a pardon from the king, presented it to the judge, and walked out of the dock unmolested. Now the King offers to every one of you a pardon. If you accept it and hide it away under your bosom until the day of final judgment, there will be no danger of condemnation, for even if sentence were passed against you, you could present that and be free. Will you receive it? Your will in this matter determines your eternal destiny.

IV

OUR BESETTING SINS

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."—HEBREWS 12:1-2.

IN speaking on the subject, "Our Besetting Sins," it will be necessary to discuss some related subjects. The context in which this verse—"The sin which doth so easily beset us"—appears would suffer violence if one attempted to treat only that line, leaving out of account what goes before and what follows.

From the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where Paul defines "faith," down to and including our text, there is no break in thought; and in order to see what any part of this Scripture means, one must endeavour to keep all of it in mind. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews "faith" is first defined, then interpreted, and the great apostle draws upon the history of his nation for his illustrations. From Abel—the second son of Adam, down to Jesus—the only Son of God, including the

heroes—Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the heroines—Sarah and Rahab, the author of this epistle recites their deeds of daring and rehearses their glorious victories. The full purpose of that recital is made evident in our text. He wanted to appeal to his own people, to his own generation, and for that matter, to all generations, and inspire to high endeavour by rehearsing the history of a glorious past.

It is not difficult to see the illustration the apostle here employs, namely, that of the Grecian race course in which trained athletes strained for the laurel of olive leaves, a figure which the apostle uses to incite an interest in the crown that is "incorruptible" and "that fadeth not away."

If one reads the history of the Olympic games and learns how the successful runner had his name proclaimed, his parentage announced, his country called out; how friends and admirers strewed his path with flowers, presented him with costly gifts; and how, if he were a citizen of Athens, five hundred drachmæ and free rations for life awaited him on his return home; while poets with national reputations dedicated hymns to him and famed sculptors carved his statue at the command of the government, he would not wonder either at the ambition of the youth who ran this race, or the judgment of the apostle who selected it as a type of the Christian's ideal endeavour. In this country the champion football player is much glorified, but in that, the racer was regarded more highly still; and Paul takes the whole scene of such a contest and

converts it into a race course for the Christian athlete whose reward is an unfading crown, an everlasting name, and a heavenly estate.

Consider with me, then, the text, " Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God " (Heb. 12:1-2).

Notice three things—The Cloud of Witnesses, The Besetting Sin, and The Sufficient Saviour.

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

" Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight " (vs. 1).

This cloud of witnesses is a multitude in number. We know from history how the thousands and tens of thousands watched these Olympic games; how the amphitheatres were filled with eager spectators, tier above tier, until a very ocean of faces swept either side of the course, and the racers knew that every step taken from start to goal was watched by countless eager eyes.

Now the apostle seems to see that the same is true of the Christian who runs the race of holiness. No less an authority than Dr. A. C. Kendrick says of this inspired picture: " Instead of cŏldly appealing to the memory and the reason, the apostle by a

magic sweep of his pen brings the whole body of distinguished confessors and champions of the Faith around his runners, and thus brings to bear upon them not only the force of their example, but their ideal presence. They are exhorted to fidelity not alone by the memory of these illustrious heroes of faith, but also by the consciousness that they are acting in the immediate presence and under the eyes of men who have wrought these deeds. Nor is this any mere figure. From their home in the clouds, from their heavenly place they are actually bending down to behold us."

If one would know what a crowd there is let him turn to Revelation and listen to the apocalyptic words, " And, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues " (7:9). The streets of the New Jerusalem are full of the saints of God. The imagery is true to inspiration! Oh, if the Grecian racers were inspired by the presence of the throngs that watched them in their course, how much greater is the multitude who witness our efforts to win the incorruptible crown!

They are sympathetic in their interest. Having successfully run this race, they can never look on those who are striving to accomplish the same without the utmost sympathy with their endeavour. Some object to taking this Scripture literally because they think it would result in sorrow and tears for the saints. They say, " How could a mother or a father, a brother or a sister, or friend, look down from heaven upon the drunkard or the harlot and be happy? "

On closer study of this Scripture you will find that these witnesses behold only the runners. As in Hebrews 1:14, the angels of God as ministering spirits are sent forth "to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," so here the witnesses watch with loving interest those who are to win unfading crowns. How like our God to hide from the eyes of His own the sins that could only result in a vain sorrow, but reveal to them the struggles that have a sure promise of victory! We can witness failure on the part of our children and defeat for our friends without sorrow, if only we clearly see that such is a part of the process by which they are being perfected.

Again, is it not the office of the Spirit of God to deal with the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins? He only is commissioned to visit him and convict him and call him from his grave, while glorified saints and happy angels minister to them only whom the Holy Ghost has already made alive.

With what sympathy, then, and with what hearts of hope must these heavenly watchers look on our struggles! Henry Ward Beecher speaks of the battle of the Sedan and says, "On the mountain beyond Sedan during that terrible conflict there were two watchers. One Sheridan, our own man, watched with all the enthusiasm of the warrior, but in the vast host before him it is not probable that there was one present in whose veins his blood ran. Right by his side King William watched, and there were both of his sons leading parts of that gigantic army. Both of them—the king and the general—were warriors and watchers. But the king's heart

was in his eyes; his was the outlook not merely of generalship but of parental love as well."

And so, as these witnesses look upon us from the heavenly heights, they do it not with the cold indifference of strangers, but with the inspiring sympathy of elder brothers in the faith; with that interest which is ever born of kindred experience.

Again, their witnesses are glorious in character. What an array of great names! It did make a difference with wrestlers and racers who watched. It should make a difference with us who our witnesses are. Have we not noticed that even the dumb beasts are subject to this sentiment? The swift racer never does his best when in training on the track. It is when the lovers of horse-flesh have gathered from the ends of the earth, and ten thousand eager eyes are upon him, and thousands of throats are open to applaud him, and hands are clapping him that he lowers his record. In all avocations men illustrate the enthusiasm growing out of the consciousness that the good or the great are watching them. One of the constant spurs to the average student is the eyes of the upper classmen and professors. He knows that these have accomplished already what he is striving to accomplish and that they expect the same of him, and therein is inspiration.

There is no such a forum in which to train for oratory as the Parliament or House of Congress, where the young speaker stands in the midst of men famed for their ability in eloquence. I knew a young physician to undertake a difficult surgical operation while four or five of the most famed sur-

geons of the country looked on. When he had finished it and listened to their congratulations, he admitted as afterward we talked together, "I had to do it and do it well with those fellows watching."

Oh, men and women, engaged now in the race of the Christian life, remember that Abel sees you; Enoch's eyes are upon you; Father Abraham is eager to see you succeed; Jacob, remembering his own trials and yet eventual victory, is solicitous; Joseph, nobleman indeed, more saintly now after these millenniums in heaven, is immeasurably concerned; and so on with the whole catalogue of Hebrews eleven, and with the new list of names including Paul, Peter, John, Polycarp, Clement, Tertullian, Augustine, Abelard, Savonarola, Luther, Melancthon, Hus, Wyclif, Wesley, Edwards, Spurgeon, Moody, Chapman, and then thousands of others who have lived gloriously and died victoriously, and now from their heights watch to see you do the same! What an inspiration in the fact that we run this race in the presence of such a multitude of sympathetic witnesses, and the company of sainted men and women so glorious in character!

THE BESETTING SIN

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (vs. 1).

Let me give two or three suggestions from this part of the text, pertaining especially to the verse, "The sin which doth so easily beset us."

The apostle here defines the sin. "Which doth so easily beset us." The Greek word here employed—*euperistaton*—permits of two interpretations, either of which might be honestly argued. The more common of these is the idea expressed in the word itself, namely, "easily standing around," as if there were certain sins that lurked always near at hand, and were, therefore, ready to smite us and defeat us. Some have believed these to be the constitutional weaknesses of life, and if so, how surely indeed do they stand around; how constantly must be our care to keep them from fresh and victorious attack.

The other interpretation is that which Campbell Morgan once expressed in my presence—"the sins standing round about," or, in other words, the sins that are common on the part of our associates, and so, "in good standing." I do not believe that the Greek word will bear that interpretation, but his suggestion in the matter is a most admirable one. The sins that are very near at hand, lurking at our side, ready at any moment to attack our lives and injure our characters, are the sins that are in "good standing" round about. There is such a predisposition to the false philosophy—"When in Rome be as the Romans"—and we are always in Rome. Christ said of His disciples, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil" (John 17:15). How needful the prayer! How mighty a temptation! How easy for the sin that my neighbour commits without concern and that many of my neighbours either approve or at least defend, to

beset me! Such is the depravity of our nature that we like to find excuses for the thing which the flesh desires, and if only there are a few good folks that commit it and a minister or two who defend it, how Satan does beset us to adopt it.

It takes more than ordinary character—it takes positive Christian conviction and a high type of Christian character for a young girl in the high school to say "No" to the thing that all her associates are doing solely because, when at secret prayer, God whispers to her soul, "This is wrong!" How hard for the business man whose acquaintances in the marts of trade adopt methods of money-making which are successful to resist the same temptation because God, in answer to his prayer, whispers to his soul, "This is wrong!" How hard for the woman fitted in person and accomplishments to take a leading part in society life to put it all aside and give herself to more serious concerns, when over against God's secret whisper, "This is wrong," the majority of her acquaintances are boldly affirming, "This is right."

And yet, beloved, this is the very thing of which the Apostle Paul is speaking—the sin near at hand, the sin that does not seem so sinful, the sin that comes in delightful disguise, and gives promise of worldly pleasures. Rev. William Knight reminds us that one of the commonest chemical experiments exhibits the different effects upon combustible substances of different atmospheres. We all know that common air consists chiefly of two ingredients—oxygen and nitrogen—the one a supporter of combustion, and the other not. As you make one

element or the other preponderate, you may of course quicken combustion or repress it. Introduce a lighted taper into a jar charged with pure oxygen and it will burn with tenfold brilliancy; subject it to the action of unmixed nitrogen, and if not withdrawn, it will gradually expire.

So, in like manner, is it with that mysterious new life " which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it " (Rev. 2:17). When the flame of faith is introduced into any heart by the Holy Spirit of God, it will glow or fade according to the moral or spiritual atmosphere by which it is encircled. Prayer, Bible study, Christian friends, Sabbath peace—surround it with these and it will burn with steadily augmented brilliancy. " The whole body " will be " full of light." On the contrary, worldly amusements, worldly society, the things that are in the world are to the new life a depressing atmosphere. It cannot burn in it. Love and faith and hope grow dim. Fervour diminishes; there is but a spark left. Withdraw it quickly or it will die. This witness is true. Oh, beloved, in view of this fact, why should we not separate ourselves from the world and thereby overcome the besetting sin?

The apostle asks to have such sins discarded. " Wherefore . . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us " (vs. 1). The figure is that of casting off a coat. Just as the man who has a new coat casts off the ragged, old one, with no desire to put it on again, so should we who have been clothed upon with righteousness cast off the filthy rags of unrighteousness. Peter appeals to the Christians whom he addresses in his

epistle in these words, " Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings " (I Pet. 2:1).

What is this? Casting off the commonest sins, the sins which do so easily beset us; casting them off, laying them aside! Surely the partaker of the new nature can do no less if he would retain his faith that he has been regenerated. In the epistle to the Colossians Paul writes, " But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him " (3:8-10).

The story is related that Mr. Moody, holding an open-air meeting in California many years ago, saw a man drive a splendid carriage to the outskirts of the crowd, listen for a few moments, and then pass on. The next day he appeared at the same place and departed after the same manner. Mr. Moody, inquiring, learned his name, that he was wealthy, but cursed with an ungovernable temper and with a blasphemous tongue. He visited the man, told him frankly what he had heard, and asked him in his kindly voice, " If this be true, what has my Master done that you should treat Him so? " The Spirit of God employed that inquiry to convict him of sin; and, taking Moody into the house, the man confessed it all, and said with tears, " Only the other day my wife came to me weeping and said that I had sworn at her before guests at our own table. And, sir, I did not even know that I had

done it." Mr. Moody pointed him to Christ and the man acknowledged his sin and accepted the Saviour.

The two parted to see each other no more for thirty years. When they did meet, just a few days before Moody's death, he asked him, "Have you ever sworn since that day?"

"Not once," answered the man, "and thank God, I have never wished to do it."

Oh, that is what the Apostle Paul demands, that we discard that sin; that we cast it off forever.

He also desires that we disregard it. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (vs. 1). In other words, let us not be clogged now by this which we have cast off. Being free from it, having put it away once for all, let us pursue our course unhindered. It seems to me that there is a suggestion here—the apostle warns the people to forget the sin, to treat it as if it had never had an existence; at least to keep it from ever coming up to clog their feet in their further course.

I suppose there is profit at times in telling what sins we have been freed from. Paul often confessed that he had been a persecutor and a blasphemer, and yet God had saved him, and to God he gave all the glory. I am sure that such missions as the Water Street, New York, and the Clark Street, Chicago, are life-saving stations because the men who bear witness in them can say to the stranded, sin-besotted auditors, "We once were as you are, but God hath redeemed us." And yet there is also a power, let it be remembered, in publishing the

other side of one's experience. The Gadarene never said a word about the devils that once inhabited him, but he did tell with eloquent tongue what great things the Lord had done for him.

In New Albany, Indiana, I had a man in my church who was not converted until he was fifty-four years of age, and he could not forget his past. Day after day he mourned over it. Every time he had opportunity he expressed his grief over it. I used to believe then, and I believe it more firmly now, that having discarded sin, we should disregard it and "run with patience the race that is set before us." Is not that what Paul talks about when, in his epistle to the Philippians, he says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Phil. 3:13-15).

Oh, friend, if your sin has been defeating you, to-night you have seen it; while I have talked you have thought upon it. The Holy Spirit of God has laid His finger upon the sore spot in your life; nobody else may understand it, but you know it. Christ has come to-night to help you put it away. May this be the time, therefore, to say, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean," and listen to His answer, "I will, be thou clean." From this hour may you go on in the good path of God's appointment, running with patience the race that is set before you.

THE SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (vs. 2). The language here in the original is, "Looking unto Jesus, the leader and consummator of our faith." The apostle has finished with a long line of saints, but he effects a climax in his exhortation to faith by setting up Jesus as its perfect example. He was the One who believed God utterly. He is, therefore, our Leader, and the Consummator of our faith.

He is our sufficient Saviour in His example. E. Barnes Lawrence says, "The Redeemer was incapable of sin, yet it is good to remember that His battle with temptation and sin was not fought with the weapons of His divinity, but with the same sort of shields that are put into our hands. As man He died and as man He lived." "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:21-23). His victory was the victory of faith, and so He is called expressly here, "The Leader and Consummator of our faith."

You will find that wherever great battles have been fought and great victories have been won, it has commonly come in consequence of the man who was the leader in battle, and the consummator of the victory. That is what Christ is to us—

the Leader in faith, and the Consummator of our victory.

He was also a sufficient Saviour in His endurance. "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (vs. 2).

One cannot read this sentence without remembering what Paul said about Moses in the preceding chapter, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (11:23-27).

What a hero! And yet that heroism came in consequence of the fact that Christ was with Moses. He taught him endurance. It was only as He led in that long contest that Moses followed; and we should fail utterly but for the fact that Christ is still our Leader and Inspirer by His endurance.

Some years ago, upon the shores of Lake Erie, there was a bicycle race from Erie to Buffalo, with the usual number of contestants. Louis Albert Banks, speaking of it, says, "I noted with a good

deal of interest that the brother of one of the young racers waited at a little town to ride the last thirty miles to Buffalo in association with his brother, that he might thus inspire him and encourage him to greater endurance."

How beautiful! And yet, beloved, our Elder Brother is doing better; from the beginning to the end of the race, He is close enough to us to commune with us! far enough ahead of us to inspire us. And that is the meaning of His speech, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

He is also a sufficient Saviour in office. "And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (vs. 2). That is the place of power! That is the place to which He ascended when He became our High Priest. In this same epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle affirms, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (4:14-16).

Ah, He can help us! His intercession avails! Charles Spurgeon was right in saying that we cannot of ourselves maintain a perfect life. Sin will harass; old corruptions, when they are driven out by the cross, will yet struggle at the foot thereof. But Jesus Christ will be our helper. He is at God's right hand for that express purpose—to make in-

tercession for us. Not a soul of us but has sometimes wished He were here—wished He were where we could go into His presence and uncover all the heart before Him, and pour the whole tale of our woes into His sympathetic ear. In our anguish we have cried, "Oh, that He were here now." But, beloved, you can find Him! You can come even unto His seat; you can order your cause before Him. He sits at the right hand of God to hear your petition, and to bid you come and present it, and tell it all out. Come now!

V

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."—MATTHEW 12:31.

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."—I JOHN 5:16.

IN speaking to this theme, "The Unpardonable Sin," we discuss an unpopular subject. People generally would prefer not to hear about it, and on that account preachers commonly pass it by without a word. In a lifetime I have heard but three sermons on this subject; one of these was by my plain country pastor, preached in my presence when I was but a child and making a profound impression of alarm. I felt I had committed it already. Again I heard Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman speak to this subject in the Philadelphia Simultaneous Campaign and later one of his associates, Dr. Biederwolf.

Aside from these three men, in the hundreds of sermons heard, there has been scarce a reference to it.

It seems almost a needless imposition to talk to the public upon an unpalatable subject, and yet, when the purpose of preaching is kept in mind, such cannot be the case. No reference to sin is acceptable to unregenerated men, and yet Jesus and His apostles joined the prophets of God in giving so much attention to sin as to prove the importance of its discussion, the utter necessity of its proper understanding that one might escape its final consequences, judgment and death!

Doubtless silence concerning this subject has oft-times been the result of a popular conviction that no man knows what the unpardonable sin is, and that all attempts at its definition and all arguments in its elaboration are as useless as inconclusive.

Such arguments are as illogical as unscriptural. The subjects to which Christ gave Himself are clarified by His discussion of them, and their importance is emphasized by His employment of them. If there be such a thing possible as committing a sin not to be pardoned in time or eternity, then men should know about it. If there be such a thing possible as committing a sin not to be pardoned in time or in eternity, then revelation would be incomplete if it did not somewhat clearly state both the nature and character of the sin and the conditions under which it could be committed. God would not be a just God to leave us in ignorance of such a sin, and the Book would not be a sufficient revelation if it did not adequately describe the sin itself.

But God is just and revelation is complete

and the unpardonable sin is important and understandable.

THE PERMANENT REJECTION OF JESUS

A careful study of the Scripture will show that there is but one sin unpardoned and unpardonable, and not to keep you in suspense about it and to save you any ambiguity, let us hasten to state it.

The permanent rejection of Jesus is the unpardonable sin! "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12).

These Scriptures harmonize perfectly with other teachings of the Book that make it appear that several sins are regarded as unpardonable. In truth, they sum them all up, showing that they come to one and the same conclusion. As a man may commit suicide by hanging himself with a rope made up of three or more strands, so a moral and spiritual death is induced after a kindred manner and the permanent rejection of Jesus knows component parts. Let us mention three of them.

First, the denial of His essential Deity. Modernism has brought many to believe that the Deity of Christ is nothing more than an academic question, and that a man's spiritual estate is but slightly affected by his mental attitude toward Jesus.

The Scriptures do not so teach. Unitarianism and Trinitarianism are not merely the two sides in a sectarian discussion. The one dooms the soul;

the other reveals the way of life, or else the Scriptures have no meaning. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22).

A liberal Baptist professor, in a volume written some years since, said, "Suppose I do reject the Deity of Jesus? What of it? I have God left, and He is as good as Jesus any time?"

Is it so? What saith the Scriptures? "Whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (I John 2:23). "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (II John 7). "Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (II John 9). Unitarianism, then, is as Godless as Christless; and the denial of the Deity of Jesus Christ constitutes the first strand of the rope with which men commit soul suicide.

A second strand is woven by disputing the authority of the Scriptures. The words of the Lord are, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48).

This Scripture carries a double suggestion. First, it shows clearly that one cannot reject the words of Jesus without rejecting Him, and second, that in rejecting Him and His word, he is bound to the judgment of the Word itself. In the last day he will not find a compassionate Saviour in the place

of judgment, but instead the immutable Word of the Lord. He will not find the sinner's Substitute, standing there, but instead he will be confronted by the sentence of Scripture, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:28-31).

Before we pass to the consideration of the third strand that strengthens this cord of soul-destruction, let us pause long enough to remark, No man can deny the Deity of Christ without denying the authority of His Word. These sins are essentially intertwined.

Some years since, a notable Old Country critic came to Minneapolis. His book on New Theology had made quite a stir and our committee on program decided to give him no place in the evangelical ministers' meeting. His host, however, by personal invitation, assembled a number of us one morning in a small room in his church, to meet this visitor and incidentally asked him to address us upon the subject of "Theological Tendencies in Europe." At the close of his remarks he made bold to say,

" If there be anyone present who would like to ask me questions, I am willingly open to the same and will readily answer, if I can." The writer was prompted to put to him this question: " Doctor, do you believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ? " He instantly replied, " I do." We remarked, " We are so glad to hear you say it. We read your book and were pained to find you denying His Deity there. We are glad you have since changed your judgment." He hotly responded, " I have changed my judgment in nothing! I hold now as I did then. I believe in the Deity of Christ, but I also believe in the deity of every man! " Many of the ministers present cheered that shrewd exaltation of humanity and desecration of Deity.

My associate in the pastorate, sensing that I did not care to produce a controversy or convert that occasion into a debate, and yet realizing perfectly that the answer had been an evasion, said, " Just a moment, Doctor! Whose son was Christ? The son of Joseph or of the Holy Ghost? " The answer came readily, almost hotly, " The son of Joseph! I should be ashamed to hold any other position and thereby disparage paternity."

Once more thoughtless ministers cheered. My associate kept his feet until the cheer subsided, and then he quietly asked, " What, then, do you do with this Scripture, ' Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost "? (Matt. 1:18).

" Do with it? " he answered; " I do nothing with it. I do not need to do anything with it. The

Scriptures are not consistent with themselves. Why should I bother my brain about a statement like that? "

Could there be a more perfect illustration of the fact that when one denies the Deity of Christ he, by the same breath, disputes the authority of the Book? They stand or fall together. And now for the third strand.

The destruction of the faith of one's fellows. Once more Jesus speaks, " Whoso shall offend [or cause to stumble] one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea " (Matt. 18:6). A clear implication of this language is that death by capital punishment, a criminal's decease, is a thousandfold more desirable than a destructive critic's accomplishment! How men, who claim to be Christians, can occupy professors' chairs and in the presence of immature student minds scoff the sacredness of Holy Writ, talk against the Virgin Birth of Jesus as a biological impossibility, and bring these babes in Christ to stumble and become unbelievers without any apparent conviction of wrong, frightful wrong, is past our comprehension. It is a serious thing to deform the body of a child, break his spinal column and send him into the world a hunchback; it is a serious thing to cut his leg off and let him hobble his way through life; it is a more serious thing to distemper his intellect and speed him on the way to idiocy; but these are only slight hurts beside the work of him who deforms a soul by destroying faith.

" Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell " (Matt. 10:28).

Years since the Christian Endeavourers of America put in some praying for Robert G. Ingersoll, America's widely known infidel. One wonders if his soul was salvable. He had rejected Jesus; he had despised the truth, and more than any other American, he had striven to destroy the faith of his fellows.

The Ram's Horn once printed the report of a meeting between Bob Ingersoll and Henry Ward Beecher. It was said that in a company of six or seven men of letters, these two were brought face to face, and in the course of the conversation, Ingersoll was bantered by one of the men into an attack on Christianity. The tempter introduced this discussion, hoping for a verbal battle between Ingersoll and Beecher, and was disappointed when the white-haired minister disregarded all that Ingersoll had to say. Finally this gentleman turned to Mr. Beecher and said, " Have you nothing with which to answer Mr. Ingersoll? "

" Pardon me," replied Mr. Beecher, " but my mind was engaged on another matter—a most deplorable spectacle which I witnessed to-day."

" What was it? " he was asked.

" Why," said Beecher, " as I was walking down town, I saw a poor, lame man on crutches, slowly and carefully picking his way across a cesspool of mud that lay in the street. He had just reached the middle of the filth when a big, burly ruffian,

himself all bespattered, rushed up to him, jerked the crutches from under the unfortunate man, and left him helpless and hurt in the liquid dirt that almost engulfed him."

"What a brute!" one said.

"What a ruffian!" was the response of Ingersoll.

"Did you know him, Mr. Beecher?" was the question of another.

"Yes," said Mr. Beecher, rising from his chair, his long white hair falling about the manly face, and his eyes burning with righteous jealousy for men and God, "I knew him, and his name was Ingersoll, for thou art the man. The human soul is lame, but Christianity is its crutches in the highway of life. It is your effort to knock those crutches from beneath its arms and leave it hurt and helpless in the slough of despond. If robbing the soul of its only support in this earth—religion—be your profession, why, ply it to your heart's content."

Whether this incident ever occurred or not, it is an illustration of a fact, namely, it takes a God to create and develop a life, but any mental or moral highwayman may destroy it. A man who so spends his time may well be supposed to blaspheme the Spirit, and of him it would finally be written, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."

THE SUBJECT OF FEAR

The very mention of an unpardonable sin excites fear. People shudder at the thought of such a spiritual possibility. Once in a while some good

man lives in a continual horror lest he is under a condemnation that can never be lifted. Children in particular are subject to that fear. As a boy of fifteen, I greatly feared lest I had long since sent away my day of grace. But Satan is a liar and the father of lies. God will never condemn to eternal death the soul that is alarmed, lest he grieve away the Holy Spirit, for of this sin some things are certain.

First, it cannot be unconsciously committed. It is not a single act, and certainly not an inadvertent one. There is no single act that God will never forgive. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." This sin eventuates in character and is the product of long continued doubt and willingly accepted infidelity. If Gœthe's soul was lost, it was not because he was guilty of profane speech, which he sometimes used, nor yet because he was a transgressor of the seventh commandment, nor yet because he doubted the Deity of Christ and disputed the Divine Word. These things were the outward sign of the inward malady. It was because his heart preferred the evil and he continued with its practice until his character expressed its spirit.

Renan did not always reject Jesus Christ. At first he doubted Him, then denied Him, and finally derided Him. Ingersoll did not always despise the truth. At first he only found it an inconvenient leash on his lust, then came to dislike it, then hate it, and finally to spit upon it; but it took a long time. The decline was steady, and the end thereof was a Christless character. The way to hell is

well-graded at the beginning, and its downward plunge is gradual, and with some it is a leisurely walk away from holiness and Heaven.

It is a long way from the innocence of infancy to the iniquity of a fixed, immoral manhood, and practically every step of it must be taken against the light, and men know that they have chosen the downgrade, and continue it against the revealed will of the Spirit. To be sure, they do not always appreciate the rapidity of the decline, as no man does who drives down a well-graded mountain road, and they seldom think much upon the final plunge that ends in the pit. In fact, they come commonly to believe that there is no pit. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

Condemnation, then, is not against a single act. It is the product of character, and character is made by continued custom. It is absurd, therefore, for people who are solicitous about the will of the Lord to imagine that they have committed the unpardonable sin.

It is said that the good old Dr. Champion, one time pastor of the Congregational Church of Litchfield, Connecticut, finally through age, came into melancholy and concluded that he had sinned away the day of grace and that death for him would be hell. Finally it occurred to him that if he had to spend eternity in hell, he would have time to start a prayer-meeting, and do his best to break the place up, and in that happy thought he secured relief from his mental torture, and a conviction that since he didn't love the devil, or his company,

he would not be compelled to spend eternity with them.

Yet again, the unpardonable sin cannot be committed instantaneously. Many a youth fears that some single misstep will send him forever beyond the pale of God's mercy. Such a thing is impossible. Perdition is the lot of those only who have been prepared for it by an evil process. God is not a petulant God to smite us with eternal damnation for a single deed. The most cold and indifferent earthly parents behave better than that.

Some years since, I was conducting a summer Bible conference in southeastern Texas. The year previous Dr. A. C. Dixon had been the spokesman. The pavilion in which these meetings were held had been used as a dance pavilion. On every Tuesday night, the young people from the city twenty miles away went out to the pavilion and spent the evening in a dance. On this particular night, when the carload came down, they found the pavilion occupied by a crowd of Christians. Dr. Dixon spoke that evening on the Holy Spirit. These children of the world were sorely disappointed. Some of them took the train back to town; others of them drifted off to the sea, or into the woods. One fellow dropped into the meeting. He listened for ten or fifteen minutes to Dr. Dixon unfold the office of the Holy Spirit. Then, rising in evident anger, he said under his breath as he walked out, "The Holy Spirit be damned." He went straight down to the bathing beach, dressed himself for a dip, went up on top of the bath-house and dived off. The tide was out, and the water was two or three

feet more shallow than it had been when at full tide. His head struck the sand, his neck broke, and he was instantly dead. They picked him up and carried him back to the pavilion, where he had profaned the Holy Spirit.

Was he lost? Probably. Would he be condemned in hell forever because he profaned the name of the Holy Ghost? No. No man will spend eternity in hell for a single deed or a single speech. If his soul was lost, it was due to another circumstance. He had permanently rejected Jesus Christ. He had put away God's only propitiation for sin and he had continued that rejection as long as breath was in his body. "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."

I know that this is strange talk in the ears of this generation. We have had so much lavender water theology that men have come to doubt whether there be such a thing as hell or condemnation. Whatever may be the opinions of man, I am trying to give you the Word of God, and, according to this Word, there is a sin unto death. It is worthwhile, then, to sound the alarm. It is worthwhile, then, to set men on guard. It is worthwhile, then, to show how custom eventuates in character, and that a lost character is not salvable.

WHO, THEN, IS IN DANGER?

First of all, the man who denies sin is most in danger. There are people who think there is a difference of theology between Christianity and Christian Science. Not at all. In the latter there is no theology. In the latter there is no God. In

the latter there is no plan of salvation, because there is no admission of sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. . . . If we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." For the man who denies the fact of sin, there is no conceivable Gospel. He feels no need of any, and to preach to him is in vain.

The second man who is in danger is the man who says, "There may be such a sin, but I will escape it." We have read somewhere the story of an Indian merchant, who admitted that there were dangerous rocks in the sea, and knew that certain vessels had gone on them to part and perish, but who boasted that he had them located and would never steer his vessel onto them. He had passed, as he supposed, the worst part of the ocean. He had gotten by these dangerous shoals. Then, touching his spices and precious stones, he said, "Now I am rich, and even God Himself cannot impoverish me." The words had scarcely passed his lips, when an unseen breaker smote his vessel. It rocked, reeled, righted up, and then began to settle, and soon it sank. It carried down not only the treasures, but the defiant man as well.

The ocean of life cannot be successfully sailed, nor the man who supposes that he can do the same, without God. Shrewdness is not a saviour. Favourable circumstances are subject to change. A respectable situation is no security. The people who started across the Atlantic in the *Titanic* counted themselves favoured above their fellows. They were, as they had been told and as they truly

believed, in an unsinkable ship. Drinking, dancing, and hilarity characterized them. The Sunday was forgotten. God was not in all of their thoughts. Suddenly the blow came. The end was on. The sea was taking its toll.

Once more, the nearly saved are sometimes the most in danger. It is possible to be as Agrippa, almost persuaded, and yet be lost. The rich, young ruler was near Christ, but he went his way sorrowful, and, as far as we know, he never got back.

We are told that in 1885, the *Rebecca Goddard* had sailed the sea in mid-winter and was making her way into one of our ports. She was all scoured up and ready for the landing. She was coming into the harbour with banners flying and bands playing, when suddenly an ice-floe struck her side, pushed her out into the sea, and drifted her about until some of her officers perished at their post by the cold. She was near the harbour, but not in it.

When I was a lad of eighteen, and made my profession of faith, a neighbour boy sat in the same church with me. He was a close relative of both the preachers engaged in this special protracted meeting. After all the rest of us had made a profession, they continued the meeting for three days, hoping to reach him. He was under deep conviction. He was near God, but he did not surrender all. The meeting closed. He drifted back to the world and lived a godless life of dissipation. One day he was dying. A cancer had eaten away the greater portion of his mouth. My classmate was at his bedside, and his last words were, "I know that I am going; and oh, it is so dark!"

To be near is not enough. There is one hymn that I ceased to have sung years ago. My sister called my attention to the fact that no one was ever saved when it was used. It runs this way:

"'Almost persuaded,' now to believe;
'Almost persuaded,' Christ to receive;
Seems now some soul to say,
'Go, Spirit, go Thy way,
Some more convenient day,
On Thee I'll call.'

"'Almost persuaded,' come, come to-day;
'Almost persuaded,' turn not away;
Jesus invites you here,
Angels are hovering near,
Prayers rise from hearts so dear,
O wanderer, come.

"'Almost persuaded,' harvest is past!
'Almost persuaded,' doom comes at last!
'Almost' cannot avail;
'Almost' is but to fail!
Sad, sad, that bitter wail,
'Almost,' but lost!"

VI

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION FROM SIN

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—I JOHN 1:8-9.

ONE of the methods of the Holy Spirit is to use the most trite sentences for the saving of the soul. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:27).

It was apparently a weak, trite, and well-worn speech, made by a very humble minister of the Gospel, that let in the light upon the way of salvation for me. As I listened to him, he said, "I know that I am saved, and the ground of my confidence is this—that Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." I was a sinner, and seeing that He came to call me, I responded, and His promise is, "Him that cometh

unto me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). I had listened to a hundred, yea, hundreds of sermons by this same man, but the Holy Spirit took that trite speech and employed it to show me the way of life.

I do not know that the most learned and eloquent address would so clearly set before us the way of salvation as do these two or three sentences. The best of us are sinners. Salvation must come to you, as it came to me, through recognizing that fact, through seeing that Jesus is Saviour, through coming to Him as such, and claiming His promise that He will in no wise cast you out.

The veriest saint of God is only a sinner saved. It is a good deal as Victor Hugo, in *Les Miserables*, says of the Vicar of D——, the beautiful, kindly minister of the Gospel, that "he smilingly described himself as an 'ex-sinner,' and so he had none of the inaccessibility of a rigourist, and boldly professed, even under the frowning eyes of the ferociously virtuous, his temptations and weaknesses."

No man has the right to be playing the rôle of superiority because he is saved, for it is not by the good works that he has done but by the grace of God; for, as our text says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Trusting that we are in agreement touching the fact that nature never made a saint, I want to speak to you this evening on the great theme of this text, namely, "Confession and Absolution from Sin."

The first thing suggested by the text is:

THE SENSE OF SIN

The apostle here commiserates the man who has no sense of sin as self-deceived, saying, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves;" and immediately passes on to condemn such a man as in defiance to God, for "if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:10).

The conviction of sin, therefore, is the first step toward salvation. Mark you, a conviction of sin, not of sins!

Some men are convicted of their sins, of the specific violations of law, and want to be saved from that. They drink, but they want to be sober; they gamble, but they want to get an honest living; they indulge themselves in lust, but they want to rise to an atmosphere of pure love; they are profane, but they want to speak a saner language; they have lied or cheated, and trouble has come in consequence, and they would like to cease their lying and cheating and escape the sad effects thereof. Convicted of sins!

One confessed to me the other day his besetting sin, and said, "Oh, if I could only be saved from this, I would be all right!" But it is not the specific that is the trouble; it is the generic. It is not the single act, or even the iron habit; it is the heart back of the habit.

James taught the very same thing when he said, "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my breth-

ren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (James 3:11-12).

Purify the fountain of life, if you would improve conduct. The heart must be cleansed before the character can be Christ-like.

PUBLICAN'S IDEA RIGHT

The Publican had the right idea when he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He never thought of saying, "Help me to be temperate or sober." He knew that he needed something better than that, or deeper, namely, the salvation from all sin and the first step toward that salvation is to be convicted.

A man in Chicago who had been guilty of every sin in the catalogue, and had finally come to the point where he had purchased a pistol, intending to kill his wife and babies, told me that before he had executed his thought, there came over him such an overwhelming sense of sin that he left the house and threw himself upon the ground to beg for pardon, and he said, "I did not think of my drunkenness. I did not think so much of my vile language. I did not think so much of my neglect of family and cruelty toward them, as I did of the fact that I was a grievous sinner before God and was compelled to cry as David, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4). If you have been supposing that you could drop off this evil habit and that, and thereby become a Christian, you have made a mistake.

The thorn tree remains a thorn tree still, even

though you cut every thorn from its body and branches, and never in the world will it bear figs for you; and a sinner who has merely ceased from his evil habits, but has not been changed in nature, is a sinner still and unsaved, for "neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:18-19).

It is essential also to see the sinfulness of sin. Paul, writing to the Romans, said, "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (7:13). And this exceeding sinfulness is what we need to feel.

Spurgeon says, "When Paul wanted to use the very worst word that he could find to call sin by, he called it by its own name, and reiterated it, 'Sin . . . exceeding sinful.'"

For, although you may call sin black, there is no moral excellence in black or white. Although you may call sin deadly, death in itself hath no evil in it compared with sin. But, if you want a word, you must come home for it. Sin must be named after itself. If you describe it, you must speak of it as Paul did—"exceeding sinful." It is rebellion against God. It is the highest treason in the world. It is the most dreadful violation of the most righteous cause. It is the most damnable and condemning, and yet men do not feel so.

Some years ago in a mission in Chicago, I came upon an old fellow who was between sixty and seventy years of age, who had lived a most wretched life, and who was a dirty, degraded, despised hobo.

I expected to find him in tears, but to my surprise, when I asked him if he did not feel that he was a sinner, he replied, " Yes, sir; I believe that I am the boss sinner of the whole city of Chicago." And there are not a few like him—men who take real pleasure in the fact that they are sinners; who pride themselves on being " boss " sinners, and all such are a million miles removed from the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. For the man who has no sense of sin, there is no salvation proffered.

It is the sense of sin that convinces of the necessity of salvation from it. And one must be convinced of that necessity. That is the reason that Paul reasoned before Felix of " righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and wanted him to see that he must be saved from sin or fall before judgment; and that is why the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, of sin because they believe not on Christ; of righteousness, because the Christ who went to the Father made it possible; and of judgment because the prince of this world is judged, and all his emissaries will fall with him.

Be it known, therefore, that we must put away sin by the power of Jesus Christ, or perish on account of its retention.

In New York City, in the new Harlem district, there was a certain house in which every resident, after a brief period, became suddenly and mysteriously ill. When two or three people had died in it, a thorough examination of the property was made to see where the difficulty lay, and it was found that this house was built on what was known as

"made ground." The sunken lot had been filled up with refuse—dumpings brought from various parts of the city—and when this discovery was known, the owner of the house was told that he must tear it down, removing the refuse clear down to the good soil, and, laying his foundations there, build afresh.

And so, no half work will do in dealing with sin. The last vestige of it must be removed, and the life in which it has accomplished its evil results must be regenerated by the Holy Ghost. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

CONFESSION ESSENTIAL

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Mark you, "if we confess our sins"—not the sins of other people, but *our own!* There are some sinners—and they are not all out of the Church of God—who are adepts at confessing other people's sins. But the text says, "If we confess our sins," and my opinion is that the man who does that will find himself busy enough. It is a rule that the people who have the most to say about the sins of other folks are most afflicted with their own sins, and it was to this class that Jesus said, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly

to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5).

The sainted Gordon said, "Covering sin is allowable, if only the sin is another's," not ours. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but charity covereth a multitude of sins, faults, and flaws and imperfections in others. Cover other people's sins; confess your own. It does seem that tattlers could find scandal enough in their own hearts to keep their tongues busy confessing to the Lord. Strange, isn't it, that we see our own sins with such soft eyes, and look on the slightest imperfection in others with such hard vision!

Judah was ready, you will remember, to have Tamar, his daughter-in-law, burned at the stake, because she had gone wrong; but when she showed him his signet, the bracelets and the staff which he had given her in exchange for her virtue, he immediately nullified his judgment and let her off easily, and never seemed to imagine for a moment that he himself deserved the flames.

"If we confess our sins," *our* sins, mark you!

To be sure, this confession should be sincerely made. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned." But it was while Moses was stretching forth his rod toward Heaven, and the Lord was causing it "to thunder, and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground," and all Egypt was being smitten, for the hail and the fire were "very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation," and in the sight of his affliction, and in the hour of his fear, Pharaoh said, "I have sinned." But the moment the hail ceased and the

lightnings were at an end, Pharaoh was as hard-hearted as ever.

There are many men who are expecting to make the statement, "I have sinned," a talisman to take them into Heaven when the end shall come, but not so, for such a sentence is not valuable when it is not sincere.

Years ago, an old minister making his way through the woods in Canada, heard the voice of a speaker, and pushing his way along a path which led to an open space in the woods, he found a young fellow standing upon a stump, speaking to an assembled crowd. He thought at first that he was preaching, but listening, he found that he was exploiting his infidelity, criticizing the Bible, and insulting God, and saying that he had no fears for his future. The old minister walked up more closely and peered into his face, and when he had finished, he mounted the same stump and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, but two days ago this same young man was bathing above the Niagara, and getting beyond his depth, was being carried down, and in passing I heard his cries. He was piteously pleading with God to deliver him, crying his prayers to Heaven as if he felt that God was so far off that he must needs lift up his voice that he might be heard. I left my horse and rushed into that stream at the risk of my life. I delivered him. Imagine my amazement, then, to hear him to-day defying the God with whom he piteously pled for salvation only two days ago."

The crying for mercy that is coerced from us in the hour of fear is not the confession to which our

text refers, for its is rarely sincere. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Confession must be made to God. We search our New Testament in vain to find one sentence of Scripture confirming the Roman superstition of the confessional, where a priest shall listen to a narration of the sins of his fellows and shall grant them absolution. To me, one of the sad things of this century exists in the fact that High Church Episcopalians are rapidly returning to that same superstition, and in many of the churches of England and America, establishing the confessional. I do not blame the people who belong to the Roman Church, for they know no better. The Bible has been taken from them by these same pope-appointed priests, and they know not what God has said touching the relation of confession to salvation. Instead of God's Revelation, the Rubric is brought to the dying man, and from that the priest reads, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church on behalf of the sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offenses, and by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Where is the word for it? I have read this Book through several times and I don't know that there is a passage in it from Genesis to Revelation that has committed any authority whatever to a Roman priest; and I have yet to find a solitary instance in

which the authority to absolve from sins is committed to any mortal on the face of the earth. Search your Scripture.

In Isaiah I read, "To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (8:20). Our text tells us to whom we shall confess—to God. God is not deaf that He cannot hear. God is not heartless that He cannot sympathize. God is not weak that He cannot save. If we confess our sins to Him, not to any mortal man, but to the eternal Father, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

GOD ALONE CAN GRANT ABSOLUTION

In our text He has promised to grant it, and there are many other texts that confirm this same promise. Read Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

A prisoner was taken out to die, and as he rode along in the death-cart, his heart was heavy at the thought. No one of his friends could cheer him. But lo, his prince came riding up in hot haste, bearing a pardon for him, and then the man opened up his eyes, and, as though he had risen from the dead, he returned to happy consciousness. The sight of his prince had chased all gloom away. He declared that he had never seen a fairer countenance in all his days; that no poetry should ever

be dearer to his heart than those few lines of sovereign grace.

Charles Spurgeon, commenting upon this instance, says, " I remember well when I was in that death-cart and Jesus came to me with pardon; when I heard Him say, ' Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee,' I was filled with joy. I thought I never saw such loveliness before, never heard words with such music in them. Eternity itself shall never disclose anything to me more sweet, and Jesus, who is near, will readily grant you this same boon, for " if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Cleanliness is also included. " And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Forgiveness is good, but it is not enough! Pardon puts the past right. Mercy takes care of the old score, but we want to be cleansed, so that the future will be filled with life and light.

Some of you must have read Mrs. J. K. Barney's article on " A Man Without a Soul," in which she tells of that miner on the Pacific Coast whose fellows said that he never had had a soul. There was no crime in which he had not been stained, and when he was sick unto death, his fellows refused to stay with him, because they were afraid. Mrs. Barney visited him every day for a month, and every day he cursed her the more. By and by she thought to give it up, but in the night watches God impressed her to go again. Next morning she went again. Not having any one with whom to leave her little girl, she took her along and left her outside while she went in to attend to the wants of the

dying man. He met her with the same hard face and harsh words. But when he heard the child's voice, he asked that she might be brought in, and said with soft speech, "I would like to see a little girl again." When she came in, she passed him a flower and said, "Sick man, will you have a flower?" He reached out his bony hand and laid it upon the plump hand of the girl, and then tears started for the first time and he began to talk. "I had a little girl once and she died, and I have hated everybody since then. I guess I would have been a better man if she had lived, but God took her and so I have hated Him and hated everybody."

"Well," said Mrs. Barney, "I have heard you curse your mother, and I have heard you curse the memory of your wife. Would you have cared to have your little girl grow up like you?"

He lay still for a moment and then he said, "Great God, I never thought of her being bad, but perhaps she might have been, and I am glad that she died."

Mrs. Barney said, "You loved her?"

"Yes."

"Well, she is waiting for you on the other shore, and beckoning you to come, and by the help of Christ you can."

"What do you do when you want to talk to Christ?" he asked.

"I pray," said Mrs. Barney. "Won't you pray to-day?"

Prayer was answered. His soul was saved. He lived for a few weeks and then went over to the

other side. But before he died, when the boys from the mine came in to see him, he used to say to them, " Boys, I want to tell you how I got my soul cleansed. This woman told me about the blood of Jesus that cleanseth from all sins. You know how the water runs down the sluice-box and carries away the dirt, and leaves the gold behind? Well, the blood of Jesus Christ has gone over me like that, and I shall see Mary by and by—my little girl, I mean; and I shall see that Man that shed His blood that by it I might be saved from all sin," and with these words on his lips, his soul went out. And Mrs. Barney said, " Friends, if God can save my poor Jack whose hands were stained with human blood, He can save you, if you will let Him, and His blood can make you clean."

VII

THE OPEN VERSUS THE SECRET DISCIPLE

"I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."—LUKE 12:8, 9.

THIS text presents a divine command of an open confession of Christ. The times upon which we have fallen tend to constant compromise. Cowardice plays too conspicuous a part, and secret discipleship is even defended in some quarters. Men engage in discussing the essentials and non-essentials of Christianity. If by their discussion they meant to discern clearly the will of the Lord that they might work it out in life, the discovery would prove profitable, but the truth is they often are seeking to see how many even Divinely commanded duties they may eliminate without losing their souls.

That is why men will tell you it isn't essential to salvation to be a missionary. That is why they will say it isn't essential to salvation to be baptized. That is why some contend that confession is not essential to salvation. Christianity, to such, is like a fire insurance—merely a guarantee against personal losses. The Bible knows no such Christianity. The Christianity of the Bible takes another direction

altogether. It seeks to discover the Divine will that it may be done, and little concerns itself with what is essential to salvation, but rather to what is essential to obedience and to Divine approval.

We are in danger, then, of a bad definition of Christianity. It is said that Mr. Huxley once put to his students the question, "What is a lobster?" One student answered, "The lobster is a red fish that moves backward." The notation of the great professor on the margin of the examination paper was, "A very good answer, but for three exceptions: In the first place, the lobster isn't a fish; in the second place, it is not red, and in the third place, it does not move backwards. Aside from these little mistakes your answer may stand."

When one hears a definition of Christianity that reduces it to the low level of a fire-escape, he wants to strike all of that definition out and substitute another and truer one; namely, Christianity is to live a Christ life because Christ lives in us. His will becomes our will, and we ought to work out our "own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh" in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12*b*, 13).

It is unthinkable, then, that the true disciple should be a secret disciple, and this text makes that fact clear.

I invite you to the following considerations: The Reasonable Requirement; the Essential Fact, and the Absolute Demand.

THE REASONABLE REQUIREMENT

This text carries a reasonable requirement.

The man who believes on Christ should openly confess Him. Such a requirement is no greater and no different than many professions demand.

When you are called into court as a witness, the judge asks you to put up a hand and take an oath "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Why? Because the knowledge of the truth is in the interest of the public weal.

When you graduate from a reputable medical college you go out with a tacit understanding that any valuable discovery made in Materia Medica will be given to the world; you will not patent it, make a secret of it, and acquire fortune through it, but you will let men in general have the benefit of the same. Why? Because that truth also is essential to the public weal.

When in the realm of natural science a man makes a discovery, such as Copernicus made, he feels compelled to announce it. Why? Because that truth also is in the interest of the public weal.

Ignorance is ever the mother of mistakes. Intelligence and information bear children of a better sort, and yet, what is the truth of jurisprudence, what is the truth of Materia Medica, what is the truth of natural science, compared with the colossal truth that Christ saves! Shall any man therefore intimate that he has such truth and proposes to keep it to himself? Hardly!

Humboldt tells us that when the bee goes into the country and discovers a rich find of honey, he ladens himself with pollen, fills his sacks with nectar, and flies back to the bee-hive for its deposit; and, when he comes in, he crosses antennæ

with the other bees and somehow tells them of his discovery, and they go on a bee-line to share in the sweets of the same.

Shall we, who have discovered the Rose of Sharon, be silent about it? Shall we, who have tasted of His love, say nothing to our fellows?

In the Old Testament there is a story of a day when Samaria was besieged by Benhadad, king of the Syrians, and there was a great famine in Samaria. They besieged it until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver; starvation was on every side, but in the night God caused the Syrians " to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life " (II Kings 7:6, 7).

Four starving lepers, who had decided to risk life by entering the camp as beggars, when they came thence, found the camp deserted by its defenders and they ate and drank and carried out silver and gold and raiment at pleasure.

" Then they said one to another, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore, that we may go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice

of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were" (II Kings 7:9, 10).

Shall the man who has the glad tidings of salvation be silent about it?

Again, this requirement is reasonable because Christ desires it. This text is an expression of His desire. His heart is human and hungers for the expressed affection of His own.

Could the mother be happy whose child never called her by that dear name or acknowledged that sweet relationship? Would the father be content with a son who failed to express any affection?

Years since I had, in my church, a secretary of the Woman's Society of the West. She was a brilliant and beautiful woman, and a widow. In the Chicago headquarters she had an intimate friend who, like herself, was a widow also. One day they were talking together of their widowhood and the loneliness of life since their husbands were taken, and my member said to her sister, "You have had an unspeakable consolation in that lad of yours—a joy I have not been privileged." At the mention of the lad's name, tears came into the eyes of the widowed mother. She bit her lip until it almost bled. Her friend thought, "Is it possible that I have misjudged that boy; is there some hidden iniquities in his life, I have not dreamed?" The mother divined her secret thought and put up her hand deprecatingly, "Don't you dare to think it. He is just as sweet and just as wholesome as he seems, yet I must explain these tears. I think he loves me, but until he was eleven or twelve, there was not a day he did not put his arms about my

neck, shower my face with kisses and tell me of his affection. For years now he has said nothing of it, and I miss it and wonder."

To me one of the most pathetic things in the New Testament is the question of Christ concerning the nine of the ten lepers who were healed by the Divine power, and who departed without a word of appreciation, and when the one came back and fell at His feet and gave God the glory, Christ asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Are there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?"

That question ought to prick the conscience of every supposed secret disciple and compel him to call into question the sincerity of his love.

Still further, an open confession of Christ is a natural expression of a regenerate heart. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Experience bears witness that the redeemed of the Lord want to say so. The lame man at the Gate Beautiful is a normal illustration of the natural sentiment of the saved. When Peter commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to rise and walk, and "took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:6-8).

How unnatural would have been any other procedure; how ungrateful any other course of conduct; how lacking in appreciation would have been the failure of praises?

When the late Frank Crane was a preacher of the Gospel, and my close neighbour in Bloomington, Illinois, he put on a Bible conference, and among the speakers brought to Bloomington was a coloured brother from the South, a marvellously capable man. I heard him more than once and always with profit. In an appeal to the Baptists and Methodists for better missionary work among the Southern coloured folk, he said, "Rome is doing her best to capture the negro. Her gowns, and genuflections and pictures make a strong appeal; but she fails of a certain provision that is made in the Baptist and Methodist program. In the Romish system there is no chance for a shout, no opportunity of hilarious, joyful praises to God, and my people demand that. When they are saved, they say so, and when they are happy, they voice it aloud.

"We had an old deacon in one of our Southern churches whose jubilant shouts characterized almost every Sabbath service. One week his pastor went to him and said, 'Deacon, I want you to promise me not to shout next Sunday.' 'Why so?' said the deacon. 'Because our presiding elder is to be here and I want everything to go off orderly. The annual meeting is approaching, and my appointment is largely with this man, and I want to be returned to this field, so promise me.' The old man smiled and said, 'I couldn't do that, for I don't know what he might say.' The pastor argued, but the deacon was obdurate. Finally the pastor looked at his boots, and as they were utterly gone, promised him if he would go through Sunday

without shouting, he would buy him some new shoes. The old man answered, ' Fo' de lawd, it am wicked to tempt a old nigger lak dat; all I kin say is I need dem shoes and will do ma best.'

" Sunday came; the presiding elder selected a dangerous subject; namely, salvation, and with the usual Southern preacher custom of sixty years ago, he started straight through the Bible to see what it had to say on his special topic. In Genesis he found his beginning, the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

" In the prophets he found the promises of the One to be born of a virgin who should bear in His body our sins on the tree. In Matthew he found a child born, and they called His name Jesus, since He should save His people from their sins. In all the Gospels he found Christ hanging on Calvary's tree, shedding His precious blood, Himself a substitute for sins. In Acts he found Christ risen and ascending to the right hand of the Father, where in His office of High Priest He was to make intercession for us, and in Revelation he found the redeemed throngs casting their crowns at His feet and shouting, ' Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! '

" At each successive stage the old man's spirits rose, but he suppressed his shouts until the point of the heavenly throng was reached. When he listened to the whole family of God in heaven paying tribute to His Lord, silence became painful, oppressive, impossible; and the first thing the pastor knew, the old man had leaped into the air, and even as he went up, his face aglow, his arms uplifted, he shouted, ' God be praised! Boots or no

boots, Ise a' gwine, too! ' So in spirit and in speech, the old saint joined the heavenly host! "

What a sin it would have been to have silenced him! More important still, how impossible it was to repress his joy or suppress his shout. The redeemed of the Lord had to say so. It was the natural ebullition of a regenerate heart.

Still further, this text also carries:

AN ESSENTIAL ACT

To confess Christ openly is essential in more than one respect.

First of all, it is essential to one's own safety. If there could be a secret disciple he would not be a safe disciple. The man who only secretly indulges hope in Jesus is still the subject of Satan's manipulations. That is one reason why he is secret. Satan doesn't want him to speak out. When temptations rise, Satan comes with them; in fact, he creates them, and he says to the tempted one, " Now, if you do this, you do not bring any disgrace upon the cause of Christ. You are a Christian, but the public does not know that, and the Church does not know it, so you do no dishonour to your Lord."

For years my experience attested the truth of what I am saying. The devil triumphed over me again and again. I read my Bible and prayed, and in a sense I believed, but I had not come out openly for Christ, and consequently the devil easily duped me and constantly conquered against me, until I saw that a secret disciple knew no safety.

Forty years ago in Chautauqua, New York, I

heard Sam Small lecture on "From Bar to the Pulpit." He told the story of how drink had characterized and cursed his life as a young lawyer, and how Sam Jones had come in and preached the love of God and reached his heart, and how he had gone forward for prayer and remained on penitent knees until the clouds lifted and light came; how he went that same night and had ten thousand dodgers struck off, professing his conversion and promising for the next night to join Sam Jones in the pulpit and give his testimony. He went home to bed, and the devil tempted him as he had never tempted him before. It was a night of agony—the demon of strong drink drove all sleep from his eyes and demanded gratification. He fought it out until the break of day, and finally won his victory, and his testimony was that his victory rested in the circumstance that through this printed circular he had openly confessed Christ, and, raging as was his desire to drink, he was unwilling to gratify it at the expense of Jesus and Christianity.

There is no influence that so steadies and strengthens a man as the inner consciousness that the public looks to him as one who has openly avowed his faith in the Lord to live in keeping with his profession. But for that fact Small might have fallen before daylight and doubtless would. His printed profession became his adequate protection in a time of the most terrible trial.

Furthermore, an open confession is essential to sacred influence. Sinners never seek out secret disciples to inquire the way of life. Dying men never send for secret disciples to tell them how to

be saved. Students in the Sunday School class of a secret disciple seldom know Jesus as Saviour or come out openly for Him.

In my first pastorate we had a fine fellow teaching one of my classes of boys. He was what is known as a secret disciple. Not one boy was saved, or at least not one confessed Jesus openly until the teacher saw his error, acknowledged his sin, and openly confessed the Lord.

Recently, in a large class of boys in my Sunday School taught by a man who, for reasons that he supposed to be adequate, refused to join the church, not a single one of them, under either his example or his advice, was brought into the fellowship of the church in a period of eighteen months.

We may imagine that teaching is adequate as precepts have power, but only when they are reinforced by example. The secret disciple's influence is not a sacred and helpful one; in fact, it may easily become a stumbling-stone.

As a lad in a country church in Kentucky I heard a neighbour woman arise, and between sobs, ask the people to pray for her unconverted husband. At the close of the service her brother came forward and openly confessed Christ. In his confession he said, "Twenty years I have secretly loved and sought to serve the Lord. To-day I am ashamed of the cowardice that has characterized my past, and I want to come out openly, and take my place in the church and be recognized by my brethren as a true believer."

The next morning his drinking brother-in-law came also to the assembly, and at the close of the

service he took the front seat, and when he rose to bear his testimony, he turned and looked into the eyes of the man whose sister he had married, and said, " Frank, you have been a stumbling-stone to me, and almost sent me to hell. You have lived a beautiful life for twenty years before me, and have lived it out of the Church, and, as far as I knew, without Christ, and whenever any Christian has approached me and pled with me to become a Christian, I have answered him or her, ' No use, there is my brother-in-law, as good, or better than any man in Big Bone Church, and if he can live a life like that without Christ, what need have I? ' Now, yesterday, when wife came home and told me what you said, I saw that you had led a deceptive life, and you have had help from on high while I have given you credit for being but naturally good, and when I found that you have had a Saviour to help you, I knew I needed the same Saviour to help me. Your goodness, out of the Church, came near costing me my soul! "

It is truly doubtful whether the Christian man out of the Church is not the most dangerous man to the entire community. Whether by word of lip or no, by actual life, he says to the community of the body of Christ, " There is no occasion for it," and as for Christ Himself, he says nothing! His influence, therefore, must militate against both the Church and Christ.

Once again, an open confession is essential to Church existence. If one man has a right to be a secret disciple, all men have the same right. God is no respecter of persons. If all men were secret

disciples, where were the Church? If all men were secret disciples, who would carry forward missionary work? If all were secret disciples, what would become of Christian education? If all were secret disciples, the Church itself would disappear, and civilization would lapse to paganism and finally to heathenism. They tell me " the Church is not perfect! " I had that information; no man need to give it to me. The Church can never be perfect, because it is made up of people like you and me—imperfect people—but with all of her imperfections, she is the best institution beneath God's stars.

In every great moral conflict, it is the Church that takes first place. I have known a local church to clean a whole city of its bestiality and immorality. I never knew an instance when all the secret orders in any town even undertook to close up a saloon, or one gambling hell, or shut up one bagnio. It is the influence of Christianity that has effected every moral advancement, and fought every gross local and national immorality. The conflict of the ages is between right and wrong, and in that conflict you know where the Church stands and always has stood.

The story used to be told of an old woman down in Kentucky who saw the battle raging in the corn field of a neighbouring farm. She looked about for a gun; finding none, she picked up an iron poker, and started across the field to the conflict. An acquaintance met her, and said, " Mother, where are you going; don't you see the fight between the blues and the grays? " (knowing her sympathy with the North). " You can't put down a rebellion

with a poker! " " I know I can't," said the old lady, " but by the grace of God, if I ever get there, alive, I am going to show them fellers what side I am on." I admire her spirit. The man who doesn't take sides in the great moral and ethical questions of life is no sort of a man, and certainly he is not a Christian, and the man who does take sides will find in the Church of God companionship and reinforcement, and by his own confession, will lend assistance to every true cause.

AN ABSOLUTE DEMAND

This text, however, involves an absolute demand: Confess me, and I will confess you; deny me, and I will deny you.

Robert G. Ingersoll, when he was yet alive, said it was a pity that God didn't so express Himself that men could clearly understand. Even Ingersoll, with his own marvellous ability at contorting the Book, could make of this text nothing other than it says. It is as clear as noonday: Confess me, and I will confess you!

This text stands not alone; it is confirmed by others—for instance: " The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed " (Rom. 10:8-11).

Such a Scripture doesn't indicate for a moment that eternal salvation rests with a mere verbal expression, or is effected by the overt act of a single speech, but it does clearly indicate the very evident truth that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and when a man is redeemed he will say so, and there will be an absolute harmony between his inner experience and his outward expression.

But we have said it is an absolute demand. That position is proven by the other portion of the text, " But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God " (Luke 12:9).

Take the thieves on the cross. One of them denied the Deity of Christ and railed on Him, and as far as we know, Christ denied him before God and angels. The other, doubtless equally sinful, confessed Christ and prayed to Him and received the instant response of pardon and promise, " Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

I have said a great many times, and I repeat it now, that no man need debate whether he knows and loves the Lord. If he is ashamed to own Him, it is certain that he does not, and if he does, it is equally certain that he will not be ashamed, for the Scripture says, " Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

Isn't that a strange word to be introduced in any such connection—ashamed of Jesus! Is it possible that any man ever was, or ever could be? Aye, God pity us; every one of us, in his unregeneracy, was ashamed of Him. To be sure, we had no occasion, but we were. Our pride refused to admit our

dependence; our pride kept us from confessing any loyalty or any relationship.

Dr. H. M. Wharton, recently deceased, used to have a marvellous story he told of two young men, who, if I remember correctly, were students in Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia. They were competitors for the honour of valedictorian. Their marks were so nearly even as to leave the faculty debating, and their leadership divided the college.

One of them was a six-foot-and-more man from the hill country of Virginia, the son of a poor farmer, but by reason of his brilliant intellect and his splendid personal appearance, he was the beau ideal of the school. He moved like a king among his admirers. His competitor was a tall, delicate fellow, the son of the town's washerwoman, and an ardent Christian.

The day of commencement came and the faculty had not announced the honours, but had said rather that they would at the close of all the exercises, tell to whom the honours had fallen, and had justified their unusual course by declaring their fears of conflicts and even fights between the two factions.

The time of the graduation was just at hand. The tall, handsome farmer's son was walking across the campus to where he was to deliver his speech. On the campus path he met an old man who had just alighted from the slow incoming train. He was short, stoop-shouldered, hands horny, dressed in the homespun suit of his wife's making. When he met this boy and his three companions he straightened his old shoulders, his eyes

gleamed, and he shot out his horny hand for a shake. The big fellow brushed past him without apparent notice of the old man, and said to the boys, "Come along, boys; that is an old crazy fellow, who thinks he knows me." He then swept to the platform, where he was the hero of the hour.

The old man stopped in his tracks, watched him until he vanished out of sight in the building, and then passersby heard him mutter, "My God, he is ashamed of me; ashamed of me, out of whose loins he came; ashamed of me, who kissed his baby face a thousand times before he knew the meaning of love; ashamed of me, whose hands have become horny to make possible this great day! In spite of his ingratitude, I love him, and I will not embarrass him; I will go back." He took the train out of town, more dead than alive. Every revolution of the wheels seemed to say to the old man, "He was ashamed of me," "he was ashamed of me," "he was ashamed of me," "ashamed of me," "ashamed of me," "ashamed of me." When he arrived at home, he was speechless and couldn't explain to the mother what had happened.

Like another Tito Melane, this ungrateful son delivered his oration, and was cheered to the echo by his multiplied admirers, and then the young son of the washerwoman followed with even a finer oration still (a clean conscience makes for eloquence), and he sat down in the midst of an equal, if not greater, acclaim.

Then the president stood forth and said, "You students may have condemned our unusual pro-

cedure of withholding announcement of honours until now. I think you will see the wisdom of it, and I think you will come to feel with the faculty that the last speaker is truly the honour man of the class," and turning to this young son of the washerwoman, he delivered into his hand a gold medal, diamond set, and voiced the appreciation of the faculty of his Christian life and intellectual accomplishments, and their congratulations on the honours of the day.

The young man stood a moment and then he addressed the president and faculty by saying: " Mr. President, I appreciate your words; but I want you to know that this honour does not belong to me." Looking down into the face of a little woman, who for the first time in her life had sat on the front seat that day, and who in spite of her calico dress was present and proud, as he caught her eye, he said to all, " You know my darling mother! She has washed in the homes of most of you. She has served my fellow-students over the tub. The grief of my life has been in this circumstance! Again and again I have pled with her to desist and let me drop out of school and carry the financial load, but she has insisted that I continue until this hour, consenting that, after to-day, every burden is to be lifted from her dear shoulders. Now, it must be evident to you all that my mother is entitled to this honour rather than myself. She has borne the burdens essential to my success, and with your consent, sirs, I want to bestow this honour where it belongs," and walking down from the platform, he pinned the medal on the faded calico

waist, took her face between his hands, and showered it with kisses!

The crowd was melted. The people forgot their bitterness; they obliterated the division. Foes became his friends; faculty and students joined as one in the cheers that reverberated through the building—all because he was not ashamed of her!

"Jesus, and shall it ever be—
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

"Ashamed of Jesus!—that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.

"Ashamed of Jesus!—yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away;
No tears to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

"Till then,—nor is my boasting vain,—
Till then I boast a Saviour slain;
And O, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me."

VIII

THE COWARD AND HIS RECOVERY

"But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end."—MATTHEW 26:58.

I AM to talk to you now concerning Peter, the coward; Peter, the backslider; Peter, the Christ-denier, and yet Peter, the recovered and finally the most wonderful and powerful of the twelve apostles.

Few people but are interested in him! The man whose courage has failed him takes comfort in remembering that the courage of Peter once failed him; the man who is backslidden brings hope from the reflection that Peter was, for a time, an apostate from the faith; the man who has done that which was a practical denial of Christ does not altogether lose heart, if he be familiar with the record of Peter swearing, "I know not the man."

On the other hand, the enthusiast sees in Peter a model, for if the Apostle Peter was not an enthusiast he was nothing. The man who is courageous looks upon some of the deeds of this same apostle and draws from their record greater courage still; so that whatever one's condition in the things of Christ, he may bring profit from the study of Peter.

It is not my purpose now to present all the

phases of this many-sided life, but only such of them as have to do with this subject: "Cowardice and the Recovery of the Backslider."

There are three things that I want to say concerning the dangers of distant following, and one thing in the way of deliverance from such dangers.

OUT OF COMMUNION

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, in a sermon which he preached on Peter, said: "We have different names among different denominations to express or describe Peter's condition in this text. Some call it 'backsliding;' others, 'falling from grace;' to my mind the best expression is 'out of communion.' You know that it takes the look of joy from your face; it takes the peace from your heart; it takes the power from your life." And Dr. Chapman was right, because it means, first:

Out of communion with Christ. There is no doubt that the world is full of such Christians—people who once professed and once believed, and were once peaceful and prosperous in spiritual things, but are not so now. Something has gone wrong with them. Things have not turned out as they expected, and in their disappointment they have turned away from Christ.

Peter never expected to see Christ go to the cross, but to a crown instead. Peter never expected to have such suffering come, but to share with Christ the sceptre. And so when Peter saw all of his hopes disappointed, he surrendered his faith and walked in the distance and in the dark. And Peter is not the man of nineteen hundred years

ago, but the man that sits down in the pew to-day. Is not that exactly where you are, my brother? Is not that where you are, my sister? You supposed that things would be a certain way, and when they did not so come to pass, you were disappointed and said, "Well, it is all over now," and you gave up your faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ.

Some people part with their faith as soon as sorrow sweeps over them. That is the very time when one needs it most; and sorrow, instead of separating us from the Son of God, should bring us into closer touch with Him. A dear woman said to me that she never understood the sympathy of Jesus so well as she did then, for she had never passed through such sorrows as she had come into at that time.

Dr. Chapman said, "I am very sure we were never in our lives nearer Heaven than when one evening, just as we reached our new home in Philadelphia, when we were in one of the hotels, and my wife held in her arms our firstborn boy and he was dead. I remember how we stood there before his little lifeless form, and we thought our hearts were breaking; but, as the tears fell down our cheeks, they became His telescopes, and Heaven was never nearer or God nearer, than with His hand upon us, in the weight of affliction."

It sometimes seems that disappointment and sorrow determine whether our faith is sincere. If it is shoddy, these things destroy it altogether, and we give up the Son of God. If it is sincere, the very chastening clarifies the vision, and we come closer to Him than ever before.

Oh, you who are out of communion with Christ, because sadness and disappointment have come into your life, have you forgotten that He has suffered as you have never done, and knows how to sympathize with you, and how to succour you in your trials, and that He is what you need now to sweeten life and overcome this sorrow? To conquer is to keep in constant communion with Him.

Then Peter was out of communion with the Christians. He had separated from James, and John, and Andrew, and Philip and the rest. They had not done to suit him. He wished to deliver his Lord by the power of the sword, but had had to put up the sword and suffer reproof for his use of it; and so he separated himself from the company.

Some men will not stay in the church unless the church will do their way, employ their weapons, adopt their methods. They go out of it, or if they stay in it, they act as if they were out of it—criticize it, condemn it, refuse to fellowship with it.

Some years ago I met, in Chicago, a newspaper reporter. I did not spend three minutes with him, but saw in so short a time that he was utterly godless and corrupt. As I walked away from the place of introduction I remarked to the friend who had introduced us that this reporter seemed an abandoned man, and what was my surprise to have him answer, " Don't you know his history? He used to preach the Gospel here; in fact he was pastor of one of our prominent churches. But the time came when he was on trial before his brethren for his behaviour. They condemned him and since that time he has soured against everything that wears

the name Christian." The trouble with him was not the church, nor the brethren of that council; but himself. He was out of communion with Christians because he was out of communion with Christ. The man who follows Christ afar off soon finds fault with his brethren, and either comes back to Christ or goes out from them.

When one is out of communion with Christ and with Christians, he is ready for the second step, or the second danger of distant following. He is ready to be:

IN EVIL COMPANY

Notice that is where Peter goes immediately. He is parted from Christ. He has separated himself from Christians and he comes immediately into evil company.

We find him in an unfriendly house. "Unto the priest's palace." The priest was the enemy of Jesus Christ, and his palace, a house of poor atmosphere for a Christian.

Dr. Theodore Cuyler says, "The foetid air of some railway cars is poisonous to the lungs. Our souls have lungs also, and you cannot keep them in health while you are in an evil atmosphere—an atmosphere of dishonesty, of amusement, of sensual passion—any atmosphere that puts conscience to sleep, or benumbs your moral sensibilities. Orange trees do not thrive in Labrador, or tuberoses in snow banks; and so we cannot hope to go into a godless house and breathe that atmosphere and yet grow in grace."

While I was pastor at Bloomington, Illinois, just

a little distance from that city a man killed another man. The murder occurred in a corn field which covered about ten acres. Some time afterward the corn in the field died and dried up, and not one ear came to its maturity. The weeds in the field dried up in the same manner and long before the autumn frosts, the ten acres were brown and almost bare. Superstitious people thought the place was accursed. Without entering into that question, can we not say this, that the house in which Christ is crucified by the high priests of fashion or evil passions, or infidelity, is a poor place into which to try to grow graces? There are a number of you backslidden in soul, practically given over to Satan, who will never be restored to former love, and come into communion with Him whom you once named, and into the sweet fellowship of the Church until you separate yourself from the house in which you now live, where the very air is poisoned with an evil poison—putrid with the breath of Christ's enemies.

How can we expect to be faithful to Christ while consorting with evil company? Gœthe was right, "Tell me with whom thou dost company, and I will tell thee who thou art."

Some years ago a man confessed Christ in Minneapolis in my church. Shortly afterwards a deacon of mine was called to the court house on business, and when he arrived in the court room, he found a most sensational trial in process, with the usual contingent of loungers—lustful, leer-eyed onlookers. As he glanced at this company in the back of the room, he saw among them the man who had recently confessed Christ, and afterward

he said to me that he questioned his sincerity, adding, "I think a Christian would hardly take pleasure in such company." The old Scotch woman put it about right, when speaking of this experience of Peter's she said, "Ah; but Peter had nae business among the flunkies."

When we get into evil company we are likely to strike a level with it, and we not only lower our reputation, but carry down character as well.

Years ago Samuel W. Allerton created a stir in Chicago by resigning from the Chicago Club, one of the first social organizations of that city. He gave as his reason for withdrawing the prevalence of public drinking at the club. "The first thing you see," said Mr. Allerton, "when you enter the club is the bar, and the first thing you hear is an invitation to drink. I prefer to belong to a club that has some other excuse for its existence besides treating." Mr. Allerton was not a religious man, but he saw the truth which many so-called Christians would do well to remember, for if reports are to be in the least credited, many American clubs are places where Christ is crucified by every assembly and the man who finds there such associates as he craves is the one whose Christian character is likely to undergo just the change that came to Peter in his apostasy. Evil communications do more than corrupt good manners; they lead men to practically deny the Christ in whom they professed to believe. Again, Peter was:

LACKING IN COURAGE

He could not stand sneers. The moment that

maid said, " Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee " (Matt. 26:69), with something of a sneer upon her lip, Peter quailed before her face and denied before them all, saying, " I know not what thou sayest " (26:70).

It is a strange circumstance that men are so much afraid of sneers. Great strong fellows who could face a cannon, who were willing to fight Germany and Austria and Turkey, are frightened to death lest some society maid should make fun of them.

I believe that when the end of time comes it will be found that half the men in Hell were frightened out of their faith through dread of sarcasm and sneer. There are not a few who seem to be constituted much as was the Irish soldier, who was always boasting of his bravery when no danger was near, but who invariably retreated without orders at the first charge of the enemy. One day when an officer asked him why he did this, he replied, " Captain, I have as brave a heart as iver bate in the brist of Julius Cæsar; but sumhow or ather, whiniver danger approaches, my cowardly legs will run away with it." " The fear of man bringeth a snare " (Prov. 29:25).

Peter paled at possible persecution. He saw what was coming to his Master. He said mentally, " If I admit having been with Jesus of Galilee, a like suffering may come to me," and so, he thought to save himself through falsehood. The times upon which we have fallen are so easy that we can scarcely conceive what bravery was required to confess Christ when, to do so, meant certain perse-

cution. And yet there are people in the world today who can appreciate just Peter's situation. My friend, Dr. Carlin, formerly of China, wrote about a young woman who had come to him in great heaviness of heart, and asked if she could be saved without baptism. And when he inquired why she wished to escape baptism, she replied, "My husband is a graduate of the first degree, a candidate for official orders, and he opposes my being baptized because he thinks that if I become a Christian it will defeat his election." And Carlin said, "Should this woman disobey her husband in this, most probably he and all his people and her people would beat her and drive her from home; and a woman driven off by her husband in China is disowned by all her relations and regarded as a disgraceful criminal, for whom there can be no pardon. And yet," said Carlin, "I believe this woman will pay the price and publicly confess her faith in Jesus."

Oh, how contemptible our American cowardice seems before such a report. The most that any one endures in this country is sarcasm, sneer, social ostracism; and for the sneers of the unbelieving he receives in exchange the sympathies of Christians; for the sarcasm of the thoughtless, the love of the thoughtful; for the ostracism from godless society, admittance into the best social circle this side of Heaven; and yet men play the coward and fail from want of courage.

Peter may also have feared that death would come to him did he own Jesus as Lord. Already the process of condemnation for Christ was going on. Why think it would be less evil for His dis-

ciples? It may have been the fear of death that deterred. But there are many things more to be feared than death. Our Cuban neighbours of thirty years ago used to illustrate daily that they preferred death to slavery; and death for Christ's sake is infinitely to be preferred to life in Satan's service.

You have seen the picture entitled, "The Last Prayer." The splendid galleries of the Roman Coliseum sweep around a great circle. Within this circle, but to one side of it, is a group of twenty or thirty men and women, all bowed, save one, who stands speaking to the others, comforting them and stimulating them to the courage needful to the last hour.

Out from the cave—opening the circle into an underground den—one lion has emerged and the head of a second can be seen. Each of these ferocious beasts have turned burning eyes upon the group of praying Christians, and the picture speaks its own story. An hour more and the spattered blood and scattered bones will tell another tale of Christian martyrs. You remember, it is said, that when they built this Coliseum, a Grecian architect designed it, and on the day of its first opening the Roman Emperor thought to honour the architect by tossing Christians into the arena, and loosing upon them the hungry lions. The architect witnessed their bloody work in silence for a few seconds, and then he arose from his seat and shouted above the roar of the beasts, and the moaning of the martyrs, and the cheers and shouts of the gloating crowd, "*I, too, am a Christian!*"

He knew that it meant death to so declare himself; but he preferred to die, than, by his silence, deny his Lord. What has become of Christian courage? We, who are frightened at a shadow, at a sneer, at a possible scoff, who are paralyzed by the promised opposition of Satan, can we be saved?

I tell you, men and women, sisters and brethren, that if you would be Christ's, courage must be exercised and cowardice set aside once for all. We must be able to say with Paul, " I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," and with John we must follow Him to the very place of trial, and stand with Him through every needful ordeal. So long as shadows make us afraid; so long as sneers silence us; so long as scoffs seal our lips; so long as Satan can so paralyze us that we cannot put up a hand, or stand erect for Christ's sake, we cannot be saved. It is not raising a hand that saves a man; it is not standing up to request prayer that saves a man; but the man who cannot raise his hand, nor yet bring himself to rise for Christ's sake, is under Satan's power and is unsaved!

Now, before I have finished, let me say one thing more:

PETER REPENTED AND WAS RESTORED

He saw his mistake! " Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly " (Matt. 26:74-75).

Some men never see their mistakes. They may

have denied Christ in word, or in deed, or in both; and yet they don't see their mistake. They defend their action. They say, "What we did was all right." For such there is no salvation. One must see his mistake before he can sorrow over it. Peter must remember the words of Jesus before he weeps. It was the memory of those words that melted his soul, that humbled him to the dust.

One of the most telling pictures I ever saw is that panorama, "Jerusalem on the Day of the Crucifixion." In Chicago I once went into the building where it was exhibited, and taking my chair and moving from place to place, I studied it a whole afternoon. Every figure was a study worthy as much time. Among the men I saw, most profoundly did the picture of Peter impress me! He was represented by the artist as being distant from the cross in the cleft of some rocks, his head bowed, scarce lifting his eyes to look on the Son of Man; but as you studied him, he seemed more and more alive; and imagination helped my eyes to see the swelling of his bosom, and my ears to hear the sob from his heart, as he saw on the cross Him whom he loved and yet whom he had denied with cursing.

Poor Peter! He must have felt that day that his apostasy had cost him his soul. He had not even the faith to expect what the crucified robber asked —that his Saviour might remember him when He came into His kingdom. He supposed it all over and his salvation lost. He was humbled to the dust. He was heart-broken. He was hopeless. Good condition for one who has denied his Lord!

Repentance precedes restoration and is the only promise of it. God sees every soul, sorrowing for sin, and knows whether the repentance is genuine.

William Dawson once told a story of a little lad who was used to Methodist ways, and who went home from a revival meeting to say to his mother, " Mother, John So-and-So is under conviction and seeking for salvation, but he won't find it to-night."

" Why, William? "

" Because he is only down on one knee, Mother; and he will never be saved until he gets on both."

God knows when a man gets on both knees. The other day the Salvation Army stood on our street, speaking to the unbelieving people who had assembled about them, and when they had finished their address, one said, " Is there someone here who will seek Jesus now? " and out of the audience there came a strong, young man from whose eyes tears were freely flowing, and going out into the midst of the little Salvation Army group, he reverently bowed in the street, and they knelt with him in the dust, and the report came back to me that another was saved, and I believed it.

When the risen Christ shall send a message to His disciples at the lips of an angel, this is what He shall say to Mary, " Go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter " (Mark 16:7). " And Peter! " Blessed word! Repentant Peter is to be restored—" that he goeth before you, unto Galilee. There shall ye see him."

Oh, can it be possible that the backslidden is to have such a sweet message; is to have his name called in particular; is to be told not to despair,

but to hope instead; that he is to be singled out above all others with a special invitation? It is so! And if you be here to-night, my brother, my sister, in a backslidden state, having denied your Lord, having deserted Him in His hour of need, do not suppose that He has cast you off forever. He knows if you sorrow over that sin. The tears of your repentance He has bottled up and put forever before His vision. The cries for pardon He has caused to be recorded; and He will do for you what He did for Peter.

He saved Peter out of his sin, and oh, what an apostle He made of Peter when once He had saved him! Think of the day of Pentecost, when the people from every nation were in Jerusalem; when the same mob that had sought the life of the Lord and had taken it were surging in the streets of the city, and some one of the little company must be put forth to preach!

Peter offers himself! There might have been disciples who said, "No, no; let not Peter speak. He followed afar off." There might have been disciples who said, "No; let not Peter speak. He went unto the high priest's house, and on the porch thereof he got into evil company, and with cursing and swearing he denied Christ, playing traitor and coward! No; he'll never have the courage to face the crowd of this day. It takes a man of courage to tell this people that they have crucified Christ, the Lord of Light. Let not Peter attempt it. He will disappoint us. He will be hooted down. He will play coward and will deny again!"

But whom the Lord restores is restored; and

upon whom the Spirit of God comes, courage comes; and on that day of Pentecost Peter was the one man who was willing to stand before the sneers of the thousands; who was willing to be scoffed at, if they please; but who was able to face all frowns, to put every fear under his feet; to charge Judaism with having crucified the Christ; to invite, if they pleased, his own exaltation to the cross! Yes, the backslider can be restored!

IX

PLAYING THE FOOL AND PURPOSING REFORM

"I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."—I SAMUEL 26:21.

OUR topic is "Playing the Fool and Purposing Reform," and I think that you will agree with me that Saul of the Old Testament and the prodigal of the New, had at least one point in common, and that was their folly. I am not so sure but they also had in common the commonest characteristic of human life.

Thomas Dixon once said, "It is a great mistake to suppose that because we can boast of an intellect that our chief staple is intellect. Half of man at least is heart; one quarter at least fool, and in the remaining quarter intellect plays a part of more or less prominence. This large streak of fool runs through the whole race, and has been running since the days of Adam, and will doubtless continue yet for some time."

It is supposed to find its last analysis in the fop. I have heard of an old farmer who, driving in the streets of a certain city, and seeing the dude of the town walking with mincing steps, laid hold upon the arm of his brawny son, John, and said: "Just take a squint at that thing, John; and love God

and keep His commandments, lest you, too, should ever come to the like of that."

If fops were our only fools, it might be sufficient to let the old farmer's counsel stand, and say nothing further on the text of this chapter. But to us the unpleasant, yet evident truth is that fools are more plenty than fops, and that the biggest fool is the man who has brains but puts them to little or no use! I want, therefore, to speak to you about the foolishness of men who ought to show better sense.

"I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." In what respects was this true of Saul?

BY INDULGING SELF-CONCEIT

No man can read the history of Saul and fail to see how large a place conceit had in his shortcomings. He was a common country lad, having no other distinguishing trait than that of a magnificent physique when Samuel found him and, under God's direction, selected him for king.

You remember afterward, when reproving him, Samuel said, "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not chosen head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" (I Sam. 15:17). But from that day Saul was little in his own sight no more.

He was proud of his physical proportions. He heard Samuel say to the people, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people" (I Sam. 10:24), and Saul suddenly picked up his head and said, "That's a fact!"

He thought because he was the tallest man in all the country that he must be the kingliest of all his fellows. That's a very common but, none the less, a certain mistake. Manliness is not measured by the square inch, at least not in God's sight; and for a Sullivan or for a Sampson to imagine that he is somebody simply because of his bigness is to forget that brains and body are not always in a perfect proportion. If what scientists say is so, "an ant knows more than an elephant." Whenever I see a man bestrutting himself, simply because he is six feet or more, when he has no other traits of excellence, I am reminded of a story told me by a friend.

He said that Bill Nye went to a certain hotel to stay over night. The clerk in his hotel was famed for his likeness to Henry Clay, and consequently conceited. Nye looked so tired and dusty the clerk concluded he was a doubtful character to keep and started in to excuse himself from receiving him. He said, "We have only a poor room on the seventh floor."

"All right," said Nye, "that will be good enough for me."

"Well; the elevator has stopped for the night, and your luggage looks heavy."

"Never mind," said Nye, "if it's only seven flights, I can carry it up."

"Well, you understand, my friend," continued the clerk, "we must be paid in advance."

"Very well," said Nye, "how much is it?"

"Two dollars and fifty cents for your bed and breakfast."

"All right," said the funny man, and he fished a

roll of bills out of his right pants' pocket and lifted off the top one, a $500 note, and laid it before the astonished clerk.

"I can't change that," said the clerk.

"Well, maybe I have something smaller," said Nye. So he went down in the other pocket and took out a second roll, and lifted off a $100 bill.

"My heavens, man," said the clerk, "how much money do you think we keep around here? I can't change that."

"Well, maybe I have some smaller pieces in my vest." He took out a roll from his vest pocket and finally found a five-dollar piece and laid it down. By this time the clerk thought that he must be some distinguished man. So, taking the hotel register, he looked at the name, and said, "Oh; Mr. Nye, I forgot! We have a fine room on the second floor. You can have that."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself," said Mr. Nye, "the seventh is good enough for me," and with this Nye picked up his baggage and started upstairs. The clerk called after him, "Wait a minute, Mr. Nye; I'll call the man up and let him start the elevator."

"Don't bother about that," said Nye, "I'll get there."

He had heard of the man's conceit because of his likeness to Clay, and so he looked at him a moment and said, "By the way; did any man ever tell you that you looked like Clay?"

Immediately the man was swelling with pride. Putting his fingers in his vest pockets, and standing an inch higher, he said, "Henry Clay?"

"Oh; no, no," said Nye, "just this common yaller mud!"

He was Scriptural. The Bible says of God's dealings with us, "He remembereth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." And I have often thought that the man who is puffed up over his physique ought to take that sentence from Scripture and puncture his pride, and let out the wind, and see how much man would be left. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3).

His second conceit was in his own shrewdness. He thought himself to be a great deceiver. He lied to David, attempted to cheat Samuel, and even tried to deceive God.

But David found him out. Before he had finished lying to Samuel, the oxen and the sheep began to bellow and bleat, and that gave him away; and God uncovered every piece of deception that he attempted to practice. Such is the ordinary end of mental shrewdness. The man who starts out thinking that he is just smart enough to deceive and defraud half of his fellows is sure to come up against his own shame in the end.

Years ago a young man committed suicide in Chicago. He died rather than suffer the disgrace which his father brought upon the family a little before. That father was treasurer of a mission board, and had defaulted for about $60,000, and imagined that he had covered up his tracks. But "sin will out," and the shrewdest man that ever walked the earth is as sure to come into judgment as God lives. The poorest way in the world to

succeed is to commit sin in accomplishing one's purpose. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

Then Saul's conceit in his religion was even worse. Notwithstanding the express command of God, he essayed to be his own priest and offer his own sacrifices.

"And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue" (I Sam. 13:13-14).

Conceit of religion is one of the most characteristic sins of our time. Many a man who does not regard God, nor concern himself about Divine commandments, imagines himself to be good—"all right," he puts it. "First class fellow, meet for Heaven!" And if he went up into the temple to pray, he would say as the Pharisee did, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess" (Luke 18:11-12), and never once would he smite himself upon his breast, as the publican did, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He imagines that he is not a sinner, and he wipes his lips and says, "I am clean. I am all right. God did not need to give His Son to die for me. I can stand in my own moral excellence! I need no High Priest!" Such men stand on the precipice of ruin.

It is related that a painter, busy in making the

ceiling frescoe of a great building, was entranced with his own work and, stepping back to admire it, forgot that he stood upon a high scaffolding, and took one backward step too many, and far beneath on the cold marble, his life was dashed out. So the man who admires his own moral character, and stands back to speak of its excellence, like Saul of old, is sure to take one step too many and fall, ruined for life, and lost for eternity. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

BY DISREGARDING GOD'S COMMANDS

He is a fool indeed who forgets what God says. Hence the words of Samuel to Saul, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee. . . . But now thy kingdom shall not continue . . . because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." Again when he had been disobedient, the Lord said unto Samuel, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments."

The prodigal would never have seen the sin he did, nor yet experienced the suffering he did, if he had paid attention to what his father said. The man who to-day disregards God's commands is none the less a fool. I cannot speak of the whole moral law and show the folly of not keeping it; but there are a few points at which men are so accustomed to break God's commands that I must speak of them.

It does not pay to disregard God's commands

concerning honesty. In Romans 12:17 we read, " Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

There are a lot of fellows who think that they do not have to follow the Lord at that point.

Years ago, Joseph L. Montigue, a coin-clerk in the United States sub-treasury, forgot that command. He said to himself, " Now I can take a dollar out of each of these $1,000 bags and nobody will ever know it." All went well for a while; but one day the judgment came, when the detective laid his hand upon him and said, " This is the man," and he went to the penitentiary in consequence.

" Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished," and you, young men, who get a living by lying, touching the goods you sell, or by falsifying for your employer; and you who go up to the hole of green cloth and gamble your fellows out of it, " be sure your sin will find you out," and one day you will sit down in the midst of all possible desolation and cry with Saul, " I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."

One of the saddest men that ever came into my house was a young fellow who, in Louisville, Kentucky, imagined that he was more than a match for old sports. But one night he lost all his money. Then he played away rings from his fingers, and finally put up his piano and played that away; and when the next day dawned he was in shame, in unspeakable sorrow, having lost not only his last penny, but played out of his house the very furniture needful to its comfort; and of course it crushed the wife's heart. " Provide things honest in the sight of all men.'

It won't do to forget God's teaching concerning temperance. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. 23:31-32).

If the men of Minneapolis paid attention to the Word of God's commands, every blind pig of our city would shut up to-morrow. There would be such happiness in our homes as this city has never seen, and such joy in Heaven as only the angels of God can have.

Theodore Cuyler said, "To be a sober man costs self-restraint and the scoff of fools; to be a tippler costs a ruined purse and a ruined body and a lost soul." And you know that is the truth, and yet many imagine that they can go right on disregarding this counsel of God, and escape the evil consequences. It is the devil's delusion.

A neighbour of mine in Kentucky was riding with me forty-seven years ago, and he took out his bottle for a drink, and when I excused myself from drinking with him, he laughed at my fears and said he'd have little respect for a man who couldn't take a drink when he liked, and when he liked, let it alone.

But the mischief is, as Sam Small said, that the man who takes a drink when he likes, doesn't like to let it alone. As much as thirty-five years ago that man went to his grave, leaving behind him a broken-hearted wife and disgraced children; and if the stone that marks his resting-place had a true inscription, it might have read, "No drunkard

shall enter the kingdom of heaven." "At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

I used to be pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in New Albany, Indiana. At one time, J. J. Talbot was the Episcopal rector in that city, but years ago he was dying in South Bend, Indiana, of delirium tremens, and he called Mr. Colfax to his bedside and said, "I am dying now. This demon of drink has robbed me of everything. I began with him by sipping the wine that remained in the communion cup after the holy ordinance was over. He drove me from the ministry. Then I studied law and for a while was successful, but becoming a greater drunkard, my practice went from me. He divorced me from my wife. He rendered me a demon with whom my little children couldn't live, and he compelled me to do the cruel work of breaking my old mother's heart and putting her into an untimely grave, and now I am dying.

"I survey the field and see what my losses are: a clergyman without a cure; a barrister without brief or business; a father without a child; a husband without a wife; a son without a parent; a man with scarce a friend; a soul without a hope—all swallowed up in the maelstrom of drink."

Again I say, do not disregard God's law touching temperance. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Regard God's command of chastity. The seventh commandment is not out of date. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." If I were asked to-day

what single sin is resulting in the loss of the largest number of souls for time and eternity I should say, "The social vice." Dishonesty has no hold on a man's nature until its practice for years has depraved him. The love of liquor is not a natural lust. But sensuality is deep-seated, a part of the very physical life, a temptation destined to overthrow unless God Himself shall save. The saddest fact of the nineteenth century civilization was expressed by a travelling man, an elder in a Presbyterian church, when, upon being asked how many unconverted men consorted with lewd women, answered, "Oh, it is horrible, ninety-seven in a hundred!"

I want to speak to the hearts and consciences of the men who are present to-night. You know what may be standing between you and the salvation of your soul. I don't. If it be disregard of this commandment of God, I beg you to remember that if you propose to continue the violation of His law, you must suffer its eventual judgment.

One winter I was preaching in a town in Illinois, and among my auditors was a man who was greatly interested. A few times during the service tears marked his face. I went to his office one day and had a long talk with him. He admitted all I said was true, and answered, "I wish that I could be a Christian; but I don't see it all clearly. There are some things I can't understand." When we went away, I said to the pastor, "Mark my word, that man has an idol somewhere, and he is keeping it at the expense of his own happiness and even his prospect of Heaven." About four weeks afterward

I had a letter from the pastor in which he said, "I am saddened to tell you that the prophecy you made last February has proven true. Last week this city was scandalized. Two families are involved. Two beautiful homes are broken up. His innocent wife and the unsuspecting husband of her with whom he sinned are started on sad voyages to eternity. Children in both houses burn with shame, but none suffer as do those who, before God, were guilty."

I know now, what I suspected then, that he set salvation aside to keep his sin, and this dreadful consequence came.

A few years since in one of the insane asylums of the East, a madman walked his cell day and night, crying, "If I only had." He was employed by a railroad company to take care of a swinging bridge. The superintendent telegraphed him that a special train was coming, and not to turn the bridge until it was past. But a vessel put in. The captain, his friend, persuaded him. He opened the bridge, thinking that he could bring it back to its place before the train arrived. But when it swung to the centre of the stream, he heard the rumbling and the train was at hand. Another second and it had plunged into that abyss of death. Cries of wounded and drowning came up to his ears. His reason reeled and tottered from its throne, and ever since he has been in this mad-house, crying always when awake, "If I only had! If I only had! If I only had!"

And I want to tell you that you will either cease your sinning with women, destroying not only your

own souls, but theirs as well, or else one day you will walk the mad-house of hell crying, " If I only had! If I only had! "

BY DIVORCING HIS BEST FRIENDS

Samuel, his spiritual teacher, was set aside. It is a sad day for a man when he separates himself from all spiritual instruction. A good woman came to me a few years since and talked with me about her oldest boy. She told me how he was getting into company of those who, being evil, were sure to do him harm; and then she went on to say how she loved him, and how solicitous she was for him, and as the tears gathered in her eyes, she said, " To think that he rarely ever goes to church any more! He rarely ever hears a sermon, and when he sees a preacher come into the house, he slips out instantly, and I know that if he were right he would love God's teachers."

Now, I have seen some preachers that I didn't take to myself, and I would not blame some fellows for getting out of their way—long-faced, lugubrious spirits, men who know not how to smile. But such are the exceptions, and I say to you that it is a wretched sign when a man reaches the point where he puts the preacher away, ceases attendance upon church service and separates himself from all spiritual instruction.

David soon followed Samuel! The man who puts away the preacher will soon cut the acquaintance of the Christian.

In Chicago one year a young fellow, accustomed to attend our church, fell into a temptation. I

found it out and went to talk with him and plead with every power of persuasion I had that he cease his sinning and come back to associate with the Christian young men of my church. But he was obstinate, and his idol was dear. Shortly afterwards that same idol cost him his situation, and then he drifted for six months. One day he put in at my office and said, "I acted the fool when I gave up Christian companions." What became of him I know not, but my last information was to the effect that he was driving on to destruction.

Sin is a toboggan slide. When once Satan starts a soul down the chute of evil, his progress to ruin increases daily.

Saul had no sooner driven Samuel from his presence and compelled David to flee for his life than *he turned against his own flesh,* and sought the life of his son Jonathan by hurling a javelin at his heart. He is serving Satan to Hell's taste who comes to hate his own flesh and blood simply because it happens to be good. Jonathan could not sympathize with Saul's sins, and Saul would rather murder Jonathan than forsake them. The world knows many such.

Some years ago a man came to my study one afternoon in utter despair. He said that he had been going from bad to worse for some years and had finally left off attending church, and then came to avoid Christian people. "But," said he, "yesterday I did the meanest act of my life. Some of my comrades in vice came to get me to go with them on a spree. My poor wife interposed and quarrelled with the men, and I was fool enough to

take sides with them. After slapping her in the face, I walked out and left her in bitter tears, with a broken heart."

The souls of wrath who so love their sins, that they can treat their own in such a way, set all Hell to shouting with satisfaction. The Devil feels that he has such bound hand and foot, and they are safe.

There is only one friend more to be divorced, and *Saul soon got rid of him, namely,* GOD.

People say that a mother's love outlasts all, but that is a mistake. God's love is stronger still, and " When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up " (Ps. 27:10).

Mrs. Merry, the mother of the Chicago murderer, said, " My son ought to be hanged," but even the souls in Hell will be there by their own choice, and not because God was willing!

" God is love," and He is the very last person in the universe to give up a sinful soul. I beg of you, do not divorce Him also.

Almost every man who is playing the fool by profanity, by infidelity, by intemperance, by impurity, or by them all, purposes some time to reform, but a purpose that is not put into effect is good for nothing.

It is a devil's delusion by which souls are destroyed. If you mean it, you will stop to-night and start now, and I want to say to you, no matter what your sins are, if you start now, God is ready to receive you, and God is pledged to save you.

Many years ago, when William Dawson was preaching in London, a young lady came to him and said, " Mr. Dawson, in your sermon last night,

you said that there was not a man in all London whom Christ could not save. Now, I have found a fellow in my district who says you are mistaken. Will you go and see him? "

Mr. Dawson joined the young lady and went to the East End, and in a rickety old garret found a young man upon a pallet of straw, dying. He bent over him and said, " Friend."

The young fellow, looking upon him in amazement, answered, " You are mistaken, sir; I have no friends."

" Oh," replied Dawson, " you have Christ, and He is your friend. He is the sinner's friend."

" But," said the man, " my family have cast me off. Every friend I ever had has left me, and so I guess Christ don't care for me."

But Mr. Dawson showed him the Scriptures and declared the love of Christ, and the young man believed it, and his heart went out to those whom he had injured, and he said, " I could die in peace now if my father would forgive me."

" Well," replied Dawson, " I will go and see him."

" It is no use," said the man, " for he has disowned me. He has taken my name off the family records, and won't permit it mentioned in his house. It's no use! "

But Dawson got the address and went. In beautiful West London he rang the bell of a mansion. A liveried servant admitted him into the drawing-room. Luxuries on every side, Dawson said to himself while waiting, " Oh, what a contrast between this home and that awful garret where Joseph is! "

The prodigal said, " In my father's house is bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger," and Joseph was the prodigal. Presently the haughty merchant appeared. Mr. Dawson arose and, taking him by the hand, said, " My name is Dawson; and I come to speak to you about Joseph, your son."

The merchant started as with pain. His face flushed and he said, " I have no such a son, sir. I disown him."

" Well," replied Dawson, " I have only come to ask you to forgive him. Some of us will bury him."

The strong face suddenly melted to pity and the tears stood in his eyes, and he said, " Is Joseph sick? "

" Yes," answered the man of God, " he is dying, and he did not want to go until you had forgiven him."

In an hour that merchant made his way with Mr. Dawson into the garret of the East End, and, seeing its wretchedness, he said as he entered, " Oh; surely Joseph is not here! "

But Dawson pointed to the emaciated form on the pallet of straw, and the strong man fell down by the side of his boy and lifted his head upon his bosom. And Joseph, in a feeble voice, said, " Father, can you forgive me? "

And the father sobbed his answer, " Oh, Joseph, I would have forgiven you long ago if I had supposed that you desired it. I have never had anything for you but love, and I only had your name stricken from the records when I thought that you would not be saved. I'll call the carriage now and take you home."

"No, no," said the boy, "Christ has forgiven me and you have forgiven me. My head on your bosom, my soul resting in Christ's arms, I am happy, and the short time I live, let me stay just where I am." He lingered for a little while and then passed from the garret in East End to the Everlasting Hills.

Again, I say, God is the last to give us up. If any man would be saved tonight, all he has to do is to face about, and he will feel the everlasting arms about him, and hear the loving words of the Eternal Father, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more."

X

THE LAST NIGHT ON EARTH

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."—LUKE 12:16-21.

THIS parable of the rich fool involves a question, Why did Christ threaten the man who called his brother a fool with hell fire, and yet Himself employ the term in this description? To this question, let me give two replies: first, there are Divine prerogatives that may not be appropriated by mere man. God has a right to speech and thought such as men dare not employ; and second, God's judgment is unerring; man's, fallible. At the very point where He speaks with perfect accuracy, we might indulge the gravest mistake. He knows what folly is. Man might easily misjudge it.

And yet, even blundering man can see the ex-

ceeding folly of this farmer. Perhaps no greater mistake is ever made nor greater folly indulged than he makes and indulges who fixes his affection wholly on material and temporal things.

There is a story of a certain wealthy abbott who had a simple-minded servant. He called him into his presence one day and gave him a painted staff, and said, "Carry this until you find a man more foolish than yourself." The servant took the stick away, and every now and then, meeting some superficial person, he would study him carefully and be tempted to part with his stick; but upon better knowledge of the stranger, would retain the same.

One day his master lay dying. Sending for the servant, he said, "I want to bid you good-bye. I am going on a long journey to a land whence there is no return."

The servant said, "Have you sent all your wealth ahead of you so that when you come into that land you can live in luxury as here?"

"No," answered the master, "I have not."

"Then," said the servant, "surely with as much of it as you have, you will want to provide for your next life."

"No," said the master, "the minute I get there, I become a pauper."

"Then you didn't know that you had this journey to make?"

"On the contrary," said the master, "I have known it from my infancy."

"And you made no provision against this day? You sent no treasures into that land whither you travel?"

"None whatever," was the master's reply.

"Then," said the servant, "take back the stick, for of all the fools that I have met, no man has equalled you."

The servant's language was justified. There is no greater folly than the folly described by this text—the folly of laying up treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt, where thieves break through and steal, and where death itself can instantly pauperize. That is evidently the main point of this parable. But its careful study will involve subsidiary lessons and I want you to see the following:

THE FAVOURS SHOWN THIS MAN

According to this parable, this man was greatly favoured. He was favoured in his location; he was favoured in his vocation; he was favoured in his person.

He was favoured in his location. He lived on a farm. Up to this present moment man has never discovered a better location. The farm offers God's free air; the farm develops the body, mind and spirit; the farm presents the cleanest moral atmosphere; the farm engenders the soundest health. We think that we are within the bounds of truth when we say that the farm contributes to the most even happiness known to the human race.

Beyond all question, there is a present tendency away from the farm. This is due first to the fact that farming of late has not been financially profitable, and second, to the circumstance that youth loves society, seeks the crowded thoroughfares, and

searches for constant excitement as well as for the opportunities of largest endeavour such as are proffered by city life. It is as useless to argue with youth against the city and in favour of the farm as it would be to argue with Niagara River for flowing toward the falls. The city current is irresistible.

The time was when the majority of the people lived in the country. The time is when the majority of the people live in the city. This victory of municipal over urban life is not temporary. It is permanent. Farm privileges are but poorly appreciated. They are not the less valuable on that account.

Some time since a gentleman who had rented a farm of mine sent me word that he was leaving the farm. I went out to see why. He had sold off everything at ruinous prices. He had loaded into his wagon a little furniture, and all of his family, and was just setting off for the city when I arrived. He said to me, "I hate to do this, but the truth is that I can get $4.50 a day in the city and I can't make that amount here."

I said, "Yes, that seems to be true, but the seeming is a deception. You can get $4.50 in the city, and you can't make that here, but those four boys of yours can find on this farm health; can find on this farm occupation; can find on this farm physical and mental development; can find on this farm an atmosphere as moral as the air is clean, and when you quit this for the city, you are depriving them of all these invaluable privileges."

Since God created the earth there has never been a better location for family rearing than a farm.

But we said that *the vocation was good.* We insist upon it. This man was favoured in his vocation. We are not now speaking so much of money returns, although farming, when intelligently followed, can be made financially profitable.

The explanation of farm failures is often the folly of the men following that profession. They do not go about it intelligently, and some of them do not go about it industriously. As a lad, I had a neighbour who succeeded at farming in all seasons. If it was wet he got a good crop; if it was dry, he was never defeated. I watched him and found that intelligence in industry made him a success at times when those living right about him, by lacking it, were failures. The notion that any fool can farm is itself a foolish notion. It takes just as much forethought, just as keen intellectual effort to make a farm fruitful as to follow one of the professions successfully.

But when we said that farming was a good vocation, we referred to other and higher interests. First of all, it is an honest method of money-making. Do not misinterpret me. I am not saying that all farmers are honest. Far from it! There is no class of men who will cheat you out of five or ten cents as quickly as the farming class. If you buy berries from them the good ones are on top. If you buy peaches, they have pinned over the basket some pink gauze.

When I was a lad, if you bought tobacco in Cincinnati or Louisville by the hogshead, the farmers fixed it up in advance so that the samples would be better than that which was sold.

If the town man gives the farmer too much change, he may never see it again. There is a sort of natural antipathy between the farmer and town people. He feels, and with a good degree of justice, that they are robbing him. They pay him too little for what he produces and charge him too much for what he purchases, and at these little points he seeks to get even.

But, after all that may be truthfully said along this line, his vocation is in itself a strictly honest one. He gives for all that he gets. He puts his own sweat into the ground from which he takes his silver and his gold; and his little with righteousness is better than great revenues without right. When I compare a farmer's financial returns with those of speculators, I feel like extending my congratulations to every farmer. He isn't lining his own nest by fleecing his fellows.

I shall never forget my first visit to Chicago. It was in the fall of 1879. I had never seen any city bigger than Cincinnati, and seldom that. I was a student in Valparaiso, and very homesick, so I went to Chicago to see a little girl who was visiting that city from Ghent, Kentucky, my neighbouring town. I thought I could endure my homesickness the better after the sight of her face. Her cousin, an important railroad man, called me Mr. Riley. I appreciated my title and felt immense.

He took me to the Board of Trade in the old Board of Trade building. When he asked me if I wanted to see the Board of Trade, my idea of that place was just about as uncertain as was that of my eldest son, when he was three years of age,

about the Board of my church. We lived in the same block as the church, and the Board meetings were many. I would start off in the evening, and Howard would hang to my coat and cry to go with me. I would say, "No, dear, I am going to a Board meeting. You must stay with mamma," and she would come and carry him away. He went sobbing, and hating the Board meeting which took his father away from him. One day in the spring of the year, housecleaning was on. The bed-slats had been taken from their place and piled up in the kitchen. Howard found them and hauled them into the dining-room and piled one upon top of another. His mother in passing, seeing his work, said, "What are you doing, darling?" to which he answered, "I am havin' a board meeting."

My notion of the Board of Trade was just about as indefinite, but I went. Up in the gallery, we looked down on what was called the pit. Old Hutchison was alive and was on the floor that day, and my railroad friend pointed him out to me and told me that the name of the place was the pit. I thought then, and I think now, that it was worthy of its name. They were the craziest crowd that I ever saw together. The day was one when the market was fluctuating, and although my older brother was at that time the first physician of the Anchorage Asylum, Kentucky, and I had been through the same scores of times with him, yet I counted the Board of Trade the craziest house that I had ever been in. Men were shouting, screaming, climbing on one another's shoulders, sticking up one finger, two, or five. I could make neither

heads nor tails of any of it. Fortunes were being made and fortunes were being lost that day. Little wonder that four men, members of that Board of Trade and well known to me later when I was a pastor in Chicago, committed suicide in one year. It is enough to drive any man to the asylum to see $100,000 go from his fingers in a few minutes, and it would fit him for an asylum to win that much in the same short space.

The farmer has no such excitement. He knows no such fortunes or misfortunes. But his vocation is an honest one beside this wild gambling.

Then again, this man was favoured in his person. He must have been a man of good mind and a man of excellent muscle, or his barns would never have been bursting. It takes a combination of the two to produce a competent farmer, and when God gives you a good mind, body, a good location and a good vocation, He has done much for you.

Some one might imagine that I know nothing of farming, and that all I have to say on this subject is theory. On the contrary, I do not remember when my hard work on the farm began. I am confident that at four years of age I did everything possible to my tiny frame; and I recall perfectly that at nine years of age I made a full hand during the plow season, following the plow daily. From that time on until I was twenty-five, farming was my vocation, and ever since that time I have owned farms and supervised the same, so I am not speaking theoretically, but from experience.

There are times when the boy and even the man rebells against the farm drudgery. It is hard. It

is heavy even now, and forty years ago it was vastly more so. Machinery has lifted many loads from the farmer's shoulders, and yet enough remain. For the amount of hard work done, his financial return is the very least of all honourably occupied men, and yet his financial return is a small part of his prosperity. I have had almost an iron physique; the farm gave it to me. I have endured in the ministry what would have broken a weaker man; the farm developed the strength that has stood the strain.

In 1889 I spent three weeks at Chautauqua, New York. One day I listened to Dr. P. S. Henson lecture on "Grumblers." In the course of his lecture he said, "It is a strange fact, but fact it is, that all classes of men grumble. Lawyers grumble, doctors grumble, merchants grumble, editors grumble, teachers grumble, preachers grumble; yes, even the farmers grumble. Now, think of a man who has nothing to do," he continued, "but to walk abroad in clover waist high, grumbling. Think of a man who has nothing to do but go out and stand under the dewy distillation of the night and study the stars, grumbling."

After the lecture was over, we went for a walk together. On the way I said to him, "Dr. Henson, one of two things is true about you—either you never saw a farm in your life or your father let you off easy. I have walked abroad waist high in clover many a time, but I always walked in a stooped, swinging form, and cut the widest swath the scythe could reach. I have been out under the dewy distillation of the night many a time, but I

wasn't studying the stars. I was currying down the horses and bedding them. I was getting fodder out to the sheep. I was milking the four cows. I was getting in the stove-wood and fire-wood, back log included. I was slopping the pigs— Pardon me! My wife doesn't like that term. She cringes under it. She says it is not a nice phrase, 'slopping the pigs.' Well, I was brought up on it, and I didn't know any better until just a bit ago. I was reading a book written by a Christian Science woman, and in that book she said, 'I must now go minister to the pigs.' That is what I was doing. I was not studying the stars."

It seemed hard then, and it was. But my, what a blessing—a blessing in disguise, I grant you, but a blessing none the less! God's favour was upon me as I followed the ways of a farm, even as they were upon the man of the parable. But, according to the parable, the man was:

GUILTY OF FALSE PHILOSOPHIES

Turn to the text and give attention to them.

First, "he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do?" Now, it may be better to think with one's self than to think with too many people. On certain matters of public interest, wisdom is with the multitude, but never on matters of private investment. There you do not need them. But if you stop with yourself, you will find that self-sufficient. That is the folly of which many men are guilty. They think within themselves. God is not in all their thoughts. They ask themselves what to do when the Scripture says, "If any of

you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jas. 1:5). There are thousands of men who have taken counsel with self and have run a self-dictated life, and have come to grief.

One morning, in my study in Chicago, there was a rap at the door. I went to admit a young man, a German. He was a graduate of one of the great German universities and spoke five languages fluently, and yet that man had come to ask for aid. When I offered him a job he declined it. When I showed him the door, he went out with curses and swearing. He declared that he didn't believe in any God; that if there was a God, He had never done anything for him. God had done much for him. He had given him his opportunities for an education, but God's ability to do for him was limited by the man himself. He refused His counsels. He had resisted any advice from the Infinite one. He had never taken Him into counsel on any subject, and he was suffering solely from his own self-consulted will.

Then again this man indulged in false philosophies. *He was an Epicurean*—live while you live, the Epicurean would say, and seek the pleasures of the present day. "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (vs. 19). This philosophy has wrecked the souls of many men and is still breaking the souls of men. It is a philosophy on the basis of which hogs live. Feed them plenty and they have no interest in the future. Fill them up with corn and they have no thought of immortal-

ity. Strange that men should descend to the same beastly level, and yet strange as it is, it is often so.

Henry Ward Beecher once said, "I have heard the story of a peasant woman who offended a titled nobleman. Having the power to do so, he ordered her arrest and conviction to death, and he himself decided the method of the same. He caused stone masons to lay a stone foundation and stand her upon it; then to build around her a stone wall. It rose to her thighs, to her neck, and finally above her head. Then he told them to lay a stone flat over her and seal it down. They did, leaving her to suffocating anguish and death in a living tomb. I have no doubt that this is true, for they sought horror ingeniously in that land. But," said Beecher, "I have seen men treat themselves after the same manner. In Brooklyn I have seen men get enough gold to lay a firm foundation. Then I have seen them build gold walls around themselves till the gold rose above their heads. Then I have seen them put out their hands and lay hold on more gold, put themselves into this orifice and seal it forever about them. I have seen the moral manhood of many perish in such a living tomb."

Certainly! Who has not seen it so?

Once more, this man's decision was most inhumane. Think of one debating with himself what to do with more wealth than he can manage well. Supposing he had asked God about that surplus? Do you think there would have been any difficulty as to its disposal?

Personally, I live at the head of three institutions—the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis;

the Northwestern Bible and Missionary Training School, non-denominational and strictly evangelical; the World's Christian Fundamentals Association. It takes a few hundred thousand dollars a year to carry them on. My endless problem is that of finances. Every day I must ask, "Lord, help me to carry this load. Raise up friends to help in the discharge of bills consequent upon the conduct of these great institutions." And every day I wonder how it happens that men with millions do not come to my aid and join me in this great work of winning men to Christ, educating men for the ministry, fitting women to be missionaries, editing a magazine in the defense of the faith, carrying forward the work of fundamentalism.

But I know why. It is because too many of them haven't asked God what to do with the surplus. Instead of using it under Divine direction, they are either hoarding it, as did this man, or employing it for purely physical pleasures. That is why no man need trouble over the surplus who consults God. God's work is always in need, and God's way is always that of sacrifice for the sake of others. And what an opportunity for men! Oh, the honour of being workers together with God, and oh, the joy of linking up with Jesus in the great Christian enterprises of one's day and century.

But this parable involves a frightful descent. We began with the favour of God. We must end with the judgment against folly. Think of this man's

IRREMEDIABLE FATE

God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall

be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (vs. 20).

How suddenly this judgment fell! "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." Who can tell what a day will bring forth? Who can decide when judgment will be on? How foolish to live as if we had an eternity when we may be in the last hour of time! The most of us will go before God suddenly. We do not so imagine; we do not so plan. We think that we will be taken sick. We think that we will be on the sick bed for several weeks. We think that the family will be around about us, ministering to us. We think that the doctor and the minister will come daily to prescribe and instruct. We think that there will be plenty of chance to right any wrongs and repent any sins. But alas, with most of us it will not be so.

I had a dear relative once, an old man, tell me not to trouble about his unsaved condition, for he could fix up that matter with God in five minutes before he went. The five minutes were not given him. In an hour when he thought not, he was gone. "Now is the day of salvation. . . . To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

This man's fate was fixed. There is no second provision taught in sacred Scripture. There is no additional opportunity to be accorded in eternity. There are no promises made to the impenitent dead. There is no purchase price that will release from purgatory. There is no termination of hell's agony. Irremediable is the word. "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Folly, then, is a fateful thing. "So is he that

layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (vs. 21).

Oh, the millions that men weight themselves with! The millions that men lay up to curse their children with! What folly!

Some time since one of our millionaires said, "I would be ashamed to die rich." Every man ought to be. But however deep the shame of the man who is dying rich, who can imagine the chagrin of the rich man, who, being dead, will certainly find himself plunged into an eternal poverty. If one would know what that poverty is like, how sudden and how irremediable, let him read Luke 16:19-31:

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf

fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

XI

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."—JOHN 10:16.

THERE is a strength and beauty in this figure that only the Orientals can feel. The tending of sheep by the Eastern shepherds is so tender, and presents so much of mutual love between the shepherd and his flock that it has long been the theme of Eastern poets; and the writers of the West have not neglected it. We remember the shepherd's psalm as among the sweetest ever written:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the

days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Ps. 23).

David put into that Psalm his own shepherd sentiment. He had followed his father's flocks over the hills of Bethlehem's district.

One says, "He remembered how he had led his flock by the waters of Jordan in the warm summer, how he had made them lie down in shady nooks by the banks of the river; how, on sultry days, he had led them up the high hills that they might feel the cool air, and how, when the winter set in, he had taken them into the valleys, and into the places of refuge from the stormy blast. Well could he recall the tender care with which he protected the lambs and carried them, and how he tended the wounded of the flock."

He had learned how much the sheep were to the shepherd, and still more, how much the shepherd was to the sheep. Our hymnologists have been very fond of this same figure. It is easy for us to recall the songs that express this sentiment—"Saviour, like a shepherd lead us," "There were ninety and nine that safely lay," "I was a wandering sheep, I did not love the fold," etc., etc.

And the Scriptures warrant the repeated employment of this figure; and throughout the Word, Jesus Christ is the Shepherd, His Church is the sheepfold, Christians are the members of His flock, etc., and so I propose, not to interpret, but to apply the Scripture teaching in what I say.

THE GOSPEL CHURCH IS A SHEEPFOLD

At the opening of this chapter Jesus says, "Ver-

ily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber; but he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth and the sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out, and when he putteth forth his own sheep and goeth before them, the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. . . . I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:1-4, 14, 15). Such is the tender relation that Christ sustains to His own and the affection He exhibits toward them.

And, like a true shepherd, He had prepared for them a fold.

The sheepfold is primarily for protection. In it the flock is safe from the prowling beast, and behind its walls, secure against the pitiless storm.

I do not say that such is the primary use of the Church of Christ, but I insist that it is a very important use of it—protection and comfort for Christ's own. It is not a dormitory in which to sleep, but a fortress in which to find safety from the enemy. It is not intended for cowards to hide in. Some people seem to think so; in speaking on the mission of the Church, one says, "Some people suppose the Church built for purposes of defence only; but it is not a fort for shivering cowards to crouch behind." During the Battle of Manasses, it is claimed that an officer riding over the field found a subordinate crouching behind a hay-stack trembling from head to foot. Coming up to the

spot, the officer asked, "What sort of a place is that for you, sir?" when he was greeted with the eager reply, "Do—why, do you really think the bullets can come through?"

In the thought of personal safety the poor coward had lost the conception of his commission. The man who makes the Church of Jesus Christ a haystack behind which to hide is more often a wolf in sheep's clothing than a sheep of the shepherd's fold; and yet the Church has its defensive purposes. Sin-hunted souls are safer there than on the outside where their hungering enemies are in constant search of them. As a boy, I saw dogs after sheep a number of times; and so long as the flock stood together, the average dog would not attack them. But, when they separated, the blood-thirsty cur would follow off the single lamb and take his life, and that observation illustrates that Satan makes his most vicious attack upon the secret disciple—the man or woman who attempts to stand alone, and who, in that effort, has kept aloof from the company of the converted. There is strength in numbers, and support in association and safety in Christian fellowship.

Some years ago a party from the city of Boston attempted to climb the Matterhorn. Among them was a young doctor who, in his pride of strength and his egotism of skill, separated himself from his company, and started down the Matterhorn alone, discarding the rope that bound each member of the party to all the others. Before he had gone far, his foot touched a great piece of ice that was merely suspended over the craggy heights. It gave way

beneath his weight and, being alone, he was hurled many feet down the mountain and was found by the party mangled and dead. Few people outside of the Christ-fold—the Church—are safely marching to happiness and home.

Again, the fold was particularly for the young. Young life has more enemies than advanced age. The young lamb is in greater danger from wild beasts, in greatest danger from storms, in greatest danger of getting lost from the flock and of failing through hunger and fright. And the Christian who is youthful, in religious experience, is in greatest need of the fold of Christ. We do not believe in reckoning people members of the Church before they are regenerate. We do not believe in confirmation, at a certain age, without respect to the condition of the heart. But we do believe in a fold for all the children who will come into it through the door, Christ Jesus, and in that cultivation of spirit, that training for service, that feeding on the Word, that brings strength as absolutely essential to converted youth.

Every child should come into the Church as soon as he is old enough to know Christ and is saved by faith in Him. It is related of Coleridge that he was conversing with a gentleman who did not believe in bringing children into the Church. "Why," said the man, "should these young minds be biased in certain directions? You train them up so that when they arrive at the age of maturity, they are not able to make an unprejudiced selection of whether they would belong to the Church or not." Mr. Coleridge replied, "I would like to show you

a garden which we have at the back of the house, a very fine botanical collection." "Umph," said the man upon seeing it, "that is nothing but weeds!" "Yes," replied the philosopher, "it is because the land has not come to years of discretion and choice as yet, and I thought it unfair to prejudice the garden toward strawberries and roses; but the weeds took the liberty to grow."

And those of you who are parents, if your children are not inside of the fold ere they reach the years of maturity, Satan, who is the great dragon of Scripture, will see to it that they are sheltered with him; for, with most people salvation is in youth or never.

Dr. Williams, a long time pastor of a leading Baptist Church in Baltimore, said when he had baptized 1,016 people, "Five hundred and fifty-two of them were baptized before they were 20; 355 before they were 30; 99 before they were 40; 8 before they were 50, and only 2 after they had passed that time." And he added, "I reckon the years 9 to 15 as those that will decide most people whether they will ever be saved." And if the shepherd prepared his fold for the young, does not the Great Shepherd of our souls open the doors of His Church to the same?

THE SHEPHERD HAS SHEEP OUTSIDE OF THIS FOLD

"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold" (John 10:16).

The saved people of the world are not all in the Church. A good many of those who belong to Christ have not as yet come out openly for Him.

Christ has shed His blood and the way of salvation is the finished way for you. Christ has called to you, and you have heard His voice and recognized it. God the Father has promised you to Christ and the Scripture is "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

You know you belong to Christ by right of redemption. You know you belong to Him by reason of His call to you—His proffered salvation. You know you belong to Him by every better desire of your own heart. And yet you have not yielded fully to Him the life for which He has paid. You have refused His best appeal. You have sealed your lips and remained out of His fold, and you are dissatisfied.

You appreciate perfectly that there is something wanting in your life. When Ole Bull came to America, the friend of his old boyhood days, John Erickson, having preceded him, had already made for himself a great name as an electrical engineer, and was at his work in New York City. Ole Bull sent him word to come and hear him play, but Erickson would not go; and after Bull invited him two or three times, he took his violin and went down to Erickson's shop and started in to play. Erickson wrought on for a while, and Bull's music became more and more entrancing until Erickson dropped his tools and listened as if enchanted. Finally Bull ceased playing and started to leave, but John Erickson cried, "Oh, go on! Ole, go on! Go on! All my life long I have known there was something wanting, something absent, and this is

it. Go on! Go on!" So, there are many people in the world, and some of them over here tonight, who know that their lives are deficient—something wanting, and that something is the music of heaven—the salvation of God; and you will never be happy so long as you remain away from the Shepherd and the fold that can effect that salvation.

THE COMPANY OF OUTSIDERS!

Some of you have partially responded to the Shepherd's call. You have come nigh, and yet to be near is not enough. As a lad, I have often seen a timid sheep approach to the very gates of an inviting pasture, and then, in spite of all the shepherd's coaxing calls, run away into barren fields. And it is so with some of you. You have come up to the point where you have indulged a secret hope that Jesus has accepted you, but that hope is not well grounded, for the Scripture says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9, 10), and "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. 9:33), and you are ashamed, and so you have not fully believed on Him as yet.

But some have said, "Well, I could confess Him before the people, and yet I could never submit to baptism, and I know that is the way the Scriptures teach, but I could not do it."

Oh, yes you could. The true Shepherd never leads his sheep into places too hard for them. And He has passed through the Jordan and is calling to them to follow on. His call is your assurance of safety. Hundreds and thousands have followed Him in the act of baptism, and to every one of them He has brought a blessing; and it is absurd for you to accept Satan's objection by stopping at this point.

And then, there are those that stray in changing pasture. It is one of the difficult things in the country to drive sheep from one pasture to another without losing some in the journey, and it is equally so in the things of the Church.

Whenever people move from city to city there is serious danger lest they be lost to the Shepherd's fold by the circumstance of change. In Minneapolis to-day there are hundreds of backslidden Christians—wandering far from the green pastures of the Shepherd—lost to the fold in which they ought to be found. Their letters are in the old home church, and their names, by the mercy of an over-indulgent board of deacons, remain in the unseen manuals, but they are dead to all the interests of church life, and are astray.

That was a wise old sea-captain who told young Allyn, with whom he fell in, on a train, "When you get to Philadelphia, put in your church letter. I find it pays to tie up my ship fore and aft, even at the expense of wharfage; for if I did not, she would drive before the storm and go down," just as many are doing.

Then, there are those who have jumped out and

have run away. I speak of backsliders, disgruntled people, critics, indifferent, etc.

One afternoon in Bloomington, Illinois, I preached to men, and twelve of them came forward to confess Christ; and five out of the number were backsliders. Dreadful proportion! And yet, I expect this city has its hundreds in similar state. To-day these are feeding in the fields of the world, and are falling more and more a prey to that devouring enemy, the evil one; and they are the ones of whom the author of "Ninety and Nine" must have been thinking when he wrote:

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold—
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"'Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for Thee?'
But the Shepherd made answer: 'This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me,
And, although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep.'

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry—
Sick, and helpless, and ready to die.

"'Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?'
'They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.'
'Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?'
'They are pierced to-night by many a thorn!'"

Oh, that this last verse might be the truth of some of the straying souls to-night!

"But all thro' the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of Heaven,
'Rejoice! I have found My sheep!'
And the angels echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!'"

No wonder Jesus said as He looked upon the little company that made up that embryonic church, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

THE PERFECT FOLD, THEN, IS IN THE FUTURE

It will furnish room for all true followers. Not a one shall be excluded from it. "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice."

Nobody shall be shut out on account of poverty; nobody shall be refused on account of riches; unless the poverty is associated with sin and the riches with greed or godlessness. The high and the low, the great and the humble shall be alike welcomed into that fold when time shall have finished.

Mr. Moody tells us that he learned in China that the Chinese have in their courts two great books. When a man is tried and found innocent, they write down his name in the Book of Life; if he is found guilty, they write his name in the Book of Death. Every man and woman has his name in the Book of Death or in the Book of Life. You cannot be in both books at the same time, no more than you can be in the fold and out of it at one and the same time; and you may know whether your name is recorded and whether you are in the fold or not, by turning to the Word. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

And such as enter in shall see Jesus, the only Shepherd. The man who won't have Him to shepherd his soul cannot be saved, for He is the only Shepherd. As we are told in the text here, there are false shepherds, those who profess to save, but they are hirelings and will flee from you when the danger cometh, and leave you to fall a prey to the eternal enemy. But the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27, 28).

Dr. Chapman tells us that a friend of his was about to climb the Matterhorn, and men besieged him from every side, asking to guide him up the difficult way, but the most of them would never have brought him down in safety, for they were

simply men out of employment. When he said, "Show me your papers," only one of the whole company stepped forward, showed his certificate of ability, signed by many people whom he had conducted up and down. The others fell back before the question, having no such certificates, for they had shown none the way.

Dr. Chapman comments, "And when the sinner asks, 'What must I do?' infidelity attempts to answer; philosophy makes a vain effort to reply; learning pushes itself into the front, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, comes with the rest. Let me suggest to you the real test. Ask them each, 'What have you done?' and infidelity, and philosophy, and learning cannot show a saved soul. But He whose garments are dyed red, whose hands were pierced, and whose heart was broken, who died and rose again that He might be the justifier of all them that believe, and who has led Bunyan, Newton, MacCauley and millions more up the eternal heights and across the valley, even the valley of the shadow of death, but has saved them and kept them, and presented them unharmed before the Father, and claimed for them a place in Heaven's fold: He is the one you will want to accept!"

And if you do accept Him, you are safe. The deepest stains that have ever been made will be washed with His blood, and the most dreadful sins will be forgiven; and the forgiven, spotless soul shall be fitted for Heaven; and the Great Shepherd Himself shall conduct you into that haven that is the Father's eternal fold.

Some of you know the story of how Mrs. Whittemore, of New York City, started out, one night, through the slums carrying a beautiful white rose, which she proposed to give to the vilest girl she met. In Mulberry Street, in a veritable Hell, surrounded by some of the worst characters of the city, this godly woman found a girl in awful condition. Some of her hair was torn out by recent brawls; in her face were many marks of sin; her clothing was ragged, and her feet working their way out of the old shoes. Her eyes were as blue as the sky and her hair almost as bright as the sun, but she herself was in pitiable plight. Profanity fell from her lips and her every action invited God's condemnation. But Mrs. Whittemore pressed up close to her and, passing the rose into her hand, said, "My dear, if ever in your life you want a friend, come to the 'Door of Hope,' and I will be a mother to you." The girl said, "I am too sinful to be saved."

But some nights after that, she accepted this invitation by turning in at this mission. She found Mrs. Whittemore a mother indeed. In spite of all her sin and her unattractive appearance, that godly woman kissed her upon the one cheek and then upon the other, and that broke her heart, and she fell down sobbing at her feet. Weeks of sickness followed, but they nursed her back to health, and she came out of that illness as one who had accepted, and was saved by the Shepherd of this night's text. She went out with them to Mulberry Street, and out to Sing Sing prison, and everywhere to tell the story of God's redeeming love. In a few

months she had won a hundred of her own kind to the Shepherd of redeeming souls, and then the service of sin brought its fruit, and disease did its work and she was dead.

Mrs. Whittemore was away at the burying time. When she came back, she asked Mr. Hadley, "How did Bluebird look? Was she beautiful?" (They had called her by this nickname on account of her eyes.) "When she was in repose the marks of sin were still to be seen," said Mr. Hadley, "but when she stood up in the Water Street Mission, and told the story of her conversion, and lifted her face heavenward, as if she was looking into the face of Him who had made her free, and repeated over and over, 'Jesus! Jesus! Only Jesus!' she looked like an angel.

"And now she is an angel indeed, for the Great Shepherd has taken her unto Himself. She is happy forever in Heaven's home."

Mrs. Whittemore said, "When he told me that, I said, 'Blessed God; if Thou canst take any poor fallen girl, and so fill her with Thy Spirit, that she can be turned into such a beautiful soul-winner, Thou canst save me, and fill me.'"

And is there any one to-night who may not say the same? The Shepherd waits—will you come? We will sing:

"I've wandered far away from God,
Now I'm coming home!
The path of sin too long I've trod,
Lord, I'm coming home!"

XII

THE ONE; NOT THE NINETY AND NINE

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."—LUKE 15:1-7.

THE fifteenth chapter of Luke contains three great New Testament parables. Each of them contains a pungent truth which, once read, is never forgotten.

Doubtless there is meant to be progression in this series. The first illustrated (by the shepherd's love of the sheep) the Saviour's interest in lost souls. The second, by the woman's interest in her marriage-dowry, the Saviour's concern for the lost; and the third, by the story of the prodigal son, the

colossal illustration of God's love for lost men, and His longing for their return.

We have treated these three parables in our volume on the Gospel of Mark and Luke, and have there made note of the progress involved; but we entertain an honest doubt as to whether the parable of the prodigal son is, either in its character, its content, or its effective accomplishments, the superior of the parable of the lost sheep.

All unexpectedly to myself, I found this sermon growing in my soul; and " while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue."

This sermon is almost the only one, preached in my pastorate of thirty-two years, without having been first dictated and put into typewritten form! It therefore goes to print for the first time, and I am sure will pleasantly surprise both auditors and readers in its doctrinal reach. It is amazing that so many of the great truths of grace should be existent in a parable of but four verses. These will appear as we proceed.

THE SINNER'S ESTATE

" What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them? " It is not our belief that this is a parable for backsliders. The context compels another interpretation, " Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

It was Christ's defense for association with " *sinners,*" love for " *sinners,*" and disposition to receive " *sinners.*"

Parables do not have to walk on their all fours; and there is a sense in which God owns all men just as completely as the shepherd owns the sheep of his own flock.

God owns men by creation. Whosoever's son Adam may have become through sin, he was created a son of God. We hold the same truth obtains with reference to every babe. He also is God's by grace and only becomes the child of Satan by conscious sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him; and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

This hundredth sheep is a type of the sinner. It is a soul that has wandered from God; and is wandering still, for which the Saviour goes.

The sinner never searches for God. At this point the sheep is wisely selected in the parable. A lost dog will search for his master, and, if it be possible, find him. The lost horse will search for home, and unless tethered or otherwise corralled or controlled, will return to it; but a lost sheep has neither propensity nor power to find his way back. If he has olfactory nerves at all, he never uses them in retracking himself. If he has any sense of direction whatever, he never employs it; if he feels any desire to return to the fold, he has no abilities with which to carry it out. How like the lost man! A lost sheep knows he is lost and expresses it in a pathetic bleat, expresses it in nervous fear, expresses it in restless hunt, but he never returns of

himself. So with the lost man. The parable, therefore, is perfect as to the effect of sin upon the soul.

But the main point of this parable is:

THE SHEPHERD'S SEARCH

He goes after that which is lost. How true is this type. Christ searches for the sinner. Wicked men have often said, "I have searched for the Lord, but have not found Him." That statement is false to fact. Wicked men do not search after God. The Bible says, "They that seek me with the whole heart shall find me." The opposite is the truth; Christ does the searching; the sinner runs away. The problem of church-life, at the present time, is at that point. Sinful men have even deserted the saving vicinity, and very few of them will enter the sanctuary; and when there is an organized evangelistic endeavour, they will find it convenient to have engagements elsewhere! Multiplied instances are known where they will even leave town rather than take chances with soul-winners.

The lost sheep runs at the sight of even a friend's face. While it is with the flock it knows the shepherd's voice, but when once it is separated from it and is alone and lost, even that sense departs from it, and such fear takes possession of it that it will flee from the voice of its owner. How like unconverted men!

Fifteen or twenty years ago, with my singer, I was conducting a union meeting in the city of Detroit, Minnesota. In an adjacent county, a little

boy, of four summers, went with his mother berry-picking. While she was busy gathering berries the boy wandered about at will. When the basket was filled and she was ready to return home, she could not find the lad. Her loud calls and diligent search met disappointment and darkness brought her to the house for help. Her husband and sons called the neighbours and together they searched all night. The next day the countryside was roused and searched all day. The second day they sent to Detroit and took every minister and every man that could possibly leave his work, and the searching crowd increased. From Tuesday night until Friday night they beat the bush, but never a sight of the child. The search was given over and the child was mourned as dead. It had been a rainy week; pools everywhere and lakes on every side, and the common opinion was that the child had drowned.

Saturday afternoon, a man plowing in the field adjacent to the berry-patch, thought that he heard a sound, and following on, he saw a nude child hurrying through the bush. Instantly thinking that this was the lost child, he ran after him and the little one hid. But, marking the spot, he searched him out. He found that the child was demented. He carried him to his home and in a few days he was himself again and they asked him where he had been all that time. He answered, "I was right there in that bush!" "Didn't you see the men all about you, and didn't you hear their calls?" "Yes, I saw the big crowd, and I was afraid of them and hid." The poor lad, in his lost

estate, had not recognized in this searching company, friends; but in his insane fright, saw in their faces, foes instead and fled accordingly.

This is one great point in the parable; it is exactly as lost men behave. Jesus seeks them. Failing to see in His face that of a Friend, they flee from Him and would fain hide themselves.

But to the parable again for the second suggestion.

PERSISTENCE IN THE SEARCH

"*Go after that which is lost until he find it.*" Our Saviour is not a petulant Saviour; He is not a truculent searcher. Men sometimes debate the final perseverance of the saints. I do not take much stock in it. I know them too well; I know myself too well. But I do believe in the final perseverance of the Saviour, and therein is my hope." "Until he find it." How marvellous a truth; and how many times that fact, and that alone, accounts for salvation.

On the farm where I grew up in the South was an old negro man left over from the Civil War; a man who so loved my father that he could not be driven from the place by arms, even. His age was not known either to my father or himself. After my father's death he went to my uncle's home; after my uncle's death, to the home of my cousin. He could not quit the family; it was his, and he was theirs. The day his wife died we children lost our black mammy, and we mourned as if she had been of blood kin. I will never forget the sadness of it.

In my cousin's home the old man married a young negro woman, and by her brought up a second family. It was in the sophomore year of college life that I went to my cousin's; for that home, since my father's death, had become my home! It was the Christmas vacation. I asked my cousin if Uncle Bill was yet a converted man. She said, "No, he is not!" I took my Bible and went down to his cabin in the big back yard, and by the light of his log fire, as we sat side by side, I turned from Scripture to Scripture and showed him the way. His heart melted with the sense of love Divine; we knelt together and he yielded himself to God. Two weeks later Dr. James Kirtley, the pastor of the Big Bone Church, baptized him in the Ohio River.

I said I know not how old he was, but I do know that for forty years at least, and fifty, he had heard the same Gospel preached that led to the salvation of hundreds of the white men of that vicinity, and yet through all that time he had gone on without God and without hope. Had God grown weary and given him over? Nay, verily; the blessed Saviour had followed until He found him. A friend of mine, a pastor, immersed his father in the one hundred and fourth year of his age. How gracious is God; how persistent is our Saviour! "Until he find it."

Mark, again, the Shepherd's strength in saving. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

The Greek idiom is more beautiful than this English translation, and really means "his own

shoulder." How suggestive! The shoulder is the symbol of strength. "He is able to save unto the uttermost." The late Deacon Wesley Lawrence, member of our First Church, Minneapolis, is probably more happy in Heaven because of the enormous influence he exerted one night at a time when his pastor's faith was weak and staggering, by a speech that brought unanimity of decision to proceed with the great building program, which was carried to completion after the deacon's death.

One morning I astounded him, and brought from his eyes copious tears, by telling, in a sermon, the story of his infant life. When the morning was over he came into the side room, his face still wet, and said, "How on earth, man, did you ever find out all that about me?"

I think it was his wife who had told me. When he was a bit beyond two years of age his father, a pioneer in Wisconsin, had cleared a few acres and was building his cabin in the wilderness, and making his living largely by employment in a lumber camp. One morning his mother, in doing her work, found herself under the necessity of taking her pail and travelling to the spring where she was obliged to go for water. When she went, her babe Wesley sat on the floor playing with his big brother's shoe. When she came back, he was gone. She hunted; she called, but no answer; and she ran to the lumber camp and told the men. They quit their work and went on the search. The neighbours heard of the search and came to help. All the night long they called and looked. And all the next day they continued. When the second

night came they gathered at the little cabin and said, " Mother, it is in vain; he is gone. Either he has wandered into some place and drowned or possibly Gypsies have snatched him away. We have done our best; he cannot be found." It was ten o'clock at night when they made their report. The mother said, " Neighbours, I appreciate all you have done. I thank you for your kindness and I am sorry for your weariness! I hate to ask more, but will you do one more thing for me? Go down to that great slough where the grass has grown so high, walk in a line twenty or thirty feet apart across that place of lowland, and every few feet fire off your guns. I fear he has wandered into that awful place and might be alive there even now, and at the crack of the gun he might cry or call. Do that and I will ask no more."

They consented; the brigade formed. They were full half way across the swail when, at the crack of the gun, a man was sure he heard a sound just to the right. Crawling on his hands and knees and feeling as he went, lo, he laid hold on the babe. He was unconscious; his face was swollen to almost twice its size because of mosquito bites, but, he was alive! The man, with great vigour and joy, shouted, " He is found! " and every searcher repeated the wondrous words until the remotest man had heard and carried the happy news to the home. Mrs. Lawrence came running to receive her own.

I said, after reciting this fact,—I employ my imagination now—but I am confident that here imagination and history are one, I can hear those big lumber-jacks saying, as they gathered about

the boy and his finder, every one of them anxious to lay hands on him and carry him to his mother, "Let me take him." And I can see the mother, none too gently, push her way through the crowd to the child of her love, as well as of her sorrow; and I can see her as she gathers him to her own bosom and hugs him to her with that convulsive joy that only a mother could feel in finding her own after such a time. And I can hear those big lumbermen say, "Now, listen, Mrs. Lawrence, we will carry him home for you!" And I can hear her shrill, clear response, "No, brethren, it is beautiful of you; it is kind of you; I know you mean it well; but I cannot let you do that! I want to feel him on *my own shoulder.*"

"But, mother; you have been up for two days and nights, you are weakened by the search and worn by the sorrow, and your strength is hardly sufficient." At which she would laugh and say, "Strange, isn't it; passing strange, but, brethren, I never felt better in my life; don't take him away from my shoulder. I will carry him."

That is another point in the parable. Men say to us from time to time, "We would be Christians, but we are afraid we cannot hold out." What a strange speech! Did the lost sheep have to hold out? He did not even have to hold on. That was the Shepherd's job. And, blessed be His name, He held out. That is what Paul meant when he said, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." When the strength of the Saviour's shoulder fails your soul may be endangered, not until then!

But once again, the Shepherd's great joy! We have this in the next sentence. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

Yes, joy! There are those who imagine that this is the joy of saints and of angels. Yes, to some extent it is so, for it is joy in Heaven. The whole house of God must, by a sympathetic and intelligent sense of its meaning, rejoice when a sinner is found and saved.

But that is not what the text means. The text says that the rejoicing is the shepherd's rejoicing. You will note that in the parable of the lost coin that fact is emphasized, "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

The joy is the joy of Jesus. He sees in salvation the travail of his soul and is satisfied. And the angels, as they behold His face, share His happiness. What one word is there brought to earth from Heaven more full of joy and rejoicing than the keyword of these three parables—SAVED!

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